DANTE

HOW TO KNOW HIM

ALFRED M. BROOKS

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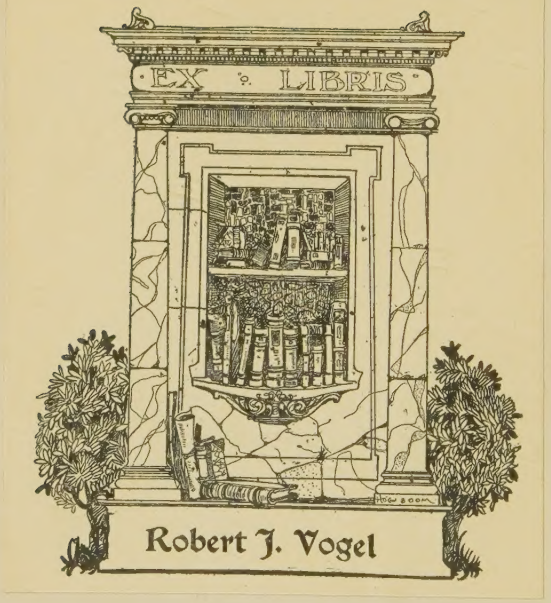

DANTE

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DANTE

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HOW TO KNOW HIM

By

ALFRED M. BROOKS

Professor of Fine Arts, Indiana University

Author of

ARCHITECTURE AND THE ALLIED ARTS, ETC.

With Portrait

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To

N. S.
and
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"I think, if I were professor of rhetoric—teacher of the art of writing well to young men—I should use Dante for my text-book. Come hither, youth, and learn how the brook that flows at the bottom of your garden, or the farmer who ploughs the adjacent field, your father and mother, your debts and credits, and your web of habits are the very best basis of poetry, and the material which you must work up. Dante knew how to throw the weight of his body into each act, and is, like Byron, Burke, and Carlyle, the rhetorician."

—EMERSON.

PREFACE

The purpose of this book is to make some of the unparalleled beauty and common sense of *The Divine Comedy* accessible to many who are wholly unfamiliar with the poem, or are kept from it by its reputed difficulties. To this end, after some brief explanation of these difficulties, we turn at once to representative passages, for the most part translated outright, but in some instances paraphrased or condensed. These passages give the complete unfolding of the story, together with its moral and philosophical significance. That some entire cantos are omitted from Hell, while no entire canto is omitted from Purgatory, or Paradise, is because condensation is imperative in such a book. The condensation has been made mostly in the Hell, because less of it is required to impress a new reader with an understanding of its essential character than is required to impress such a reader with the very different but not less essential character of Purgatory or Paradise. Long ago Lowell pointed out the misfortune

which comes of reading only Hell, and that a real love for Dante was to be known or measured by one's interest in and affection for his Paradise and Purgatory. In such degree as we come to know *The Divine Comedy* must we come to know its author, Dante, every line of whose works proves him to have been, and to be, one of the noblest of earth's sons and Heaven's heirs, because he realized as few men do "the sacredness of life's actual experiences."

Every one who has in him the love of poetry, particularly dramatic poetry, and many a one who believes that he has not, finds himself facing life from a fresh angle when he makes acquaintance with Dante, through his famous drama of justice based on love and hate. Old as his drama is, it is ever new, because it portrays, as no other, the permanent passions of the human race and their unchanging consequences, generation after generation. Lowell said: "The benignities of literature defy fortune and outlive calamity." Of Dante's work this is specially true.

The Divine Comedy is one of the world's largest assets on the ledger wherein is kept the account of

its humanities. It is a vast treasure placed to every man's credit in a bank that never fails. To help those who have not done so, to make a first draft on this account; to set within reach some of the most extraordinary benignities of all literature, remembering the while that to him who hath more shall be given, is the aim of this book.

A. M. B.

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DANTE

THE POET

THE DIVINE COMEDY is one of those works of literature which from its first appearance commands an ever-increasing number of readers. It is a book in which depth of human thinking answers unto depth. Because it deals with those questions only, which are of perennial concern to man, in every generation, it is an undying book. It is one of those works of literature which soon ceases to belong exclusively to the nation that bore it, or the tongue in which it was composed, and becomes the common and precious possession of many tongues and nations. It was the genius of the thirteenth-century Italy that made *The Divine Comedy* possible; an Italian man who wrote it. It is the glory of Italy; the supreme monument of her literature, but it has become the possession of many peoples and, increasingly, year by year, the delight of all who love the clear setting-forth of truth, ugly or lovely, in the beautiful guise of art. Its place in the empire of letters was never more justly assigned than by Tennyson who, when

called on for verses to celebrate the six hundredth anniversary of Dante's birth, wrote:

> "King, that has reign'd six hundred years, and grown
> In power, and ever growest,— . . .
> I, wearing but the garland of a day,
> Cast at thy feet one flower that fades away."

In his *Dante,* one of the best essays James Russell Lowell ever wrote, and one of the simplest, most profound and most illuminating treatises on the poet, his time and work, he says:

"Perhaps no other man could have called forth such an expression as that of Ruskin that 'the central man of all the world, as representing in perfect balance the imaginative, moral, and intellectual faculties, all at their highest, is Dante.' "

It would be an easy matter to make a long book out of the praises of famous men in every walk of life who, through the centuries, have lifted their voices in laud of the great Florentine, but that is in no sense the present purpose. The opinion of one more, Thomas Carlyle, and we are done; the opinion of a man whose own works, like Dante's, are famous for the way in which they illustrate his faith that, "the first of all gospels is that a lie can not endure forever." Coupling Dante and Shakespeare he calls them "a peculiar two." Then he says:

"They dwell apart, in a kind of royal solitude; none equal, none second to them; in the general feeling of the world, a certain transcendentalism, a glory as of complete perfection, invests these two."

In the ordinary sense of the phrase very little is known with certainty about the life of Dante beyond a few dates, and scanty records of positions of responsibility and trust which he held.

The main sources of external information are, first the famous chronicle, or history of Florence, written by Giovanni Villani, a contemporary and neighbor of Dante's. This book contains one chapter on the poet. It is the most reliable biography of Dante.

Another is the eulogy, or *Short Treatise in Praise of Dante,* written after his death, by Boccaccio. A war of opinions as to the value of the information in this treatise has long been waged.

"The Dante currently known, down even to the present day, is essentially the Dante depicted by Boccaccio." That the imaginative author of the *Decameron* took great liberty with such facts as he possessed, and without hesitation made up what he lacked, is the opinion of the bulk of authorities. On the other hand, "the chief of living Dante scholars" says: "Most grateful should we be to Boccaccio for this precious heritage; for, not only is it recorded in his own delicious and imaginative prose, not only is the portrait traced with

loving and skilful hand, but without it we should not have possessed any such portraiture at all."

It was the word portrait of Boccaccio, and the picture painted by Giotto, Dante's contemporary and friend, that together furnished Carlyle with the materials for one of the most remarkable descriptions of a man in English prose. Although this famous picture is still commonly known as Giotto's, investigation seems to show that Vasari, chief biographer of the Italian artists, was wrong in ascribing the work to Giotto. It is now assigned to Taddeo Gaddi, Giotto's pupil, and the date fixed is 1337. It is possible that Gaddi had a drawing of Dante, made by Giotto, in early life. At all events this picture shows Dante as a young man in whose face great seriousness and simplicity are evident, but by no means all of what Carlyle ascribes to the conquered and unconquerable hero-poet. Many of the qualities which constitute the greatness of Carlyle's picture are due to Carlyle's own comprehension of his subject, yet, many of those qualities were for the first time brought out in Boccaccio's eulogy. It is Carlyle who, with sympathy both delicate and virile, looking on what was painted, thinking on what was written, fired to fever heat of imagination, yet cool of judgment in the intimate presence of Dante's work, came to know Dante, and, knowing, drew this portrait in nineteenth-century English words. Every bit of

the true understanding of Dante, of his life and his reactions to life, which can be got from the best source of all, his works—by which alone he can be really known—every touch of such understanding is deepened, and made certain, and vivified by this unsurpassed portrait in *Heroes and Hero Worship.*

"A most touching face; perhaps of all the faces that I know, the most so. Lonely there, painted as on vacancy, with the simple laurel wound round it; the deathless sorrow and pain, the known victory which is also deathless—significant of the whole history of Dante! I think it is the mournfullest face that was ever painted from reality; an altogether tragic, heart-affecting face. There is in it, as foundation of it, the softness, tenderness, gentle affection as of a child; but all this is as if congealed into short contradiction, into abnegation, isolation, proud hopeless pain. A soft ethereal soul looking out so stern, implacable, grim-trenchant, as from imprisonment of thick ribbed ice! Withal it is a silent pain, too, a silent scornful one; the lip is curled in a kind of god-like disdainment of the thing that is eating out his heart—as if it were withal a mean insignificant thing, as if he whom it had power to torture and strangle were greater than it. The face of one wholly in protest, and lifelong unsurrendering battle, against the world. Affection all converted into indignation; an im-

placable indignation; slow, equable, silent, like that of a god! The eye, too, it looks out as in a kind of *surprise,* a kind of inquiry, Why the world was of such a sort? This is Dante: so he looks, this voice of ten silent centuries, and sings us 'his mystic unfathomable song.' "

The established facts of Dante's life can be set forth almost in a sentence. A paragraph is more than enough. He was born in Florence and came of good family. The year was 1265. He was married, probably in 1291, and he had children who survived him. Owing to political disputes he was banished from Florence. This happened in 1302. That he wandered for some time from place to place and at last found a hospitable welcome and home in Ravenna is certain, as it is also certain that he died in Ravenna in 1321. His bones lie in Ravenna to this day.

SOCIAL, ARTISTIC AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS OF DANTE'S TIME

Of the social, political and religious aspects of Dante's age, history records much. Of the actual look of the four chief cities associated with his name, its honor and dishonor, Florence, Bologna, Verona and Ravenna, of the actual appearance of the stage, so to speak, on which Dante lived his life and acted his famous part, we know a great deal.

Many an ancient building has come down intact, and many old pictures of what was in the thirteenth century and is no more, are still extant.

In Dante's day Italy, figuratively speaking, was like a household rent by double strife—parents fighting each other, the children taking now one and now the other side; when by chance there might be peace, or more truly a cessation of warfare between the parents, then the children formed parties of their own and fought one another. And yet most strange as it sounds there was beneath the universal bickering a really wonderful identity of purpose, an underlying, almost universal hope for the same thing. Men dreamed of a peace almost beyond comprehension, and became so enamored of their dream that they fought one another like wild animals for whatever each believed would hasten realization of the common dream.

To become literal, Italy was supposed to furnish the holiness, and Germany the worldly wisdom and strength, which were implied by the name of that extraordinary institution for governing the temporal, and directing the spiritual concerns of the world, the Holy Roman Empire, an institution conceived and born under Charles the Great and not dead officially until 1806. Bryce says that "from the days of Constantine till far down into the Middle Ages it was, conjointly with the Papacy, the recognized center and head of Christendom, exercising

over the minds of men an influence such as its material strength could never have commanded. . . . To trace with any minuteness the career of the Empire, would be to write the history of Christendom from the fifth century to the twelfth, of Germany, and Italy from the twelfth to the nineteenth. . . . Strictly speaking, it is from the year 800 A. D., when a king of the Franks was crowned Emperor of the Romans by Pope Leo III, that the beginning of the Holy Roman Empire must be dated." This Frank was Charlemagne.

Dante lived in the most vital and the most interesting period of the Empire's existence, and was beyond question the most important single figure, judged by the test of enduring influence, that the Empire added to the annals of civilization. He was a profound patriot and a devout adherent of the church. He loved Italy for itself and as part of the Empire, and he venerated the church. To Florence, the city of his birth, he was devoted, and he revered the memory of his ancestors, and the former age of simple living and high thinking, of which, in a few words, he drew such a picture as has never been equaled. "Florence was abiding in peace, sober and modest. She had not necklace or coronal, or women with ornamented shoes, or girdle which was more to be looked at than the person. Nor yet did the daughter at her birth give fear to the father, for the time and the dowry

did not outrun due measure on this side and that. She had not houses empty of families—I saw Bellincion Berti go girt with leather and bone, and his lady come from her mirror with unpainted face. And I saw him of the Nerli, and him of Vecchio, satisfied with unlined skin, and their ladies with the spindle and the distaff. O fortunate women! Each one was sure of her burial place." These are the words of Dante's ancestor, Cacciguida, when Dante meets him in Paradise.

The other side of the shield, the Florence of Dante's own day, is pictured in the famous apostrophe of the opening lines of the twenty-sixth canto of the Inferno.

"Rejoice, O Florence, since thou art so mighty that thou canst spread thy wings o'er sea and land and thy name is known throughout Hell."

It was an age in which the Emperor and the Pope, pretending to represent the interest of this world, and the other, were at incessant war over material things. It was an age in which such men as Dante believed that this world should be governed by the powers of church and state working together for the good of all; an age which believed that men should render unto God the things which are God's, and unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and that the Pope was God's vicegerent on

Earth, and the Emperor, Cæsar's. It was an age which witnessed the most fearful disputes between the spiritual and temporal powers; disputes connected with every form of falsehood, and blackened by every kind of crime. The party of the Pope was called Guelf. The Emperor's party was known as Ghibelline. When, for a little, now and then, these parties ceased to quarrel as great territorial factions, Italy against Germany, the adherents of each of these parties in the individual states, city-republics, would fall to fighting one another. It was constant internal war, civil war, the members of one house at one another's throats, that Dante saw in the place where he prayed and labored for peace, and believed peace would be if the powers who had the ordering of church and state affairs, would but be fair and brave. He was himself a Ghibelline, and it was after one of the Guelf-Ghibelline quarrels in Florence that he was banished by the leaders of the ascendent Guelf faction. The history of the time is one long record of endless fighting on a grand scale between great states; on a small scale between city and city; of the smaller war of parties within the walls of a single city; finally, of disputes between individuals. Famine, murder and pestilence walked the streets at noonday, and nowhere more than in those wonderful cities of northern Italy—the history of which is the history of

northern Italy—Siena, Pistoia, Pisa, to name but few, and before all of them, Florence.

But it must not be forgotten for a moment that at this very time there was among the citizens of these same towns a love of beauty in its most varied forms, and an inborn capacity for preserving the loveliness of what is passing, as well as the awfulness of it, in the permanent forms of art; such a love and such a capacity as the world has probably never known save when Athens was in her prime. Architecture never carried its head more proudly than when Giotto, and his successors, built the Florentine Campanile. Mural decoration has never surpassed the stage to which this same Giotto, and his contemporaries, brought it. And sculpture, too, in the persons of the Pisani, in earlier works such as the Pisan pulpit, and later, the baptistry gates, and all the arts in sweet combination, for example the tabernacle by Orcagna in the Florentine church of Or San Michele, flourished and bore fruits which have the savor of immortality about them. Of the plastic and graphic arts of the age of Dante, and the age immediately following, that can be said with truth which Plutarch said of the monuments on the acropolis in Athens: "As if every one of these foresaid works had some living spirit in it to make it seem young and fresh: and a soul that lived ever, which kept them in their good continuing state." In

looking at the Italian arts of the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, one wonders who taught their authors how to make themselves eternal, as Dante says Brunetto Latini taught him.

The works which men make with their hands are of long duration. The acts which they do to one another are of fleeting moment, and soon forgotten, unless the record of them is touched by the magic of art. When this happens, past history is made ever-present, and almost everlasting. The old chronicles and musty records of the troublous times of Dante, interesting as they are to the expert, and the scholar, would be dead to men in general had not Dante touched them with the magic of art: had he not done for Florence and the Holy Roman Empire just what Homer did for Troy and the kingdoms of Greece; made them living records of the loves and passions of human beings, and so insured them an unfailing place in the hearts and heads of living men and women utterly without regard to race or time. This was the secret of the immortality which Brunetto Latini bestowed on Dante. This was the gift which Dante acknowledged in a few lines rendered incandescent by an intensity of devotion unsurpassed among all registers of the affection of man for man. Dante says to Brunetto, whom he finds in Hell: "If my prayers were granted you would still be alive, for fixed in my mind and heart is your good, dear, paternal

image as on Earth hour by hour you taught me how man makes himself eternal. While I live it behooves me to show my gratitude in speech."

Of the age, of the papal-imperial quarrels, of the internecine wars, Dante has left, among many, one surpassing portrait. Of what the age was on the side of art, the expression of wise and beautiful thinking, in the medium of stone, or paint, or words, the works of the age prove, and none of them more fully than *The Divine Comedy.* Here is Dante's famous portrait of his own times; one of the most remarkable ever drawn of any times:

"Ah, servile Italy! hostel of grief! ship without pilot in great tempest! not lady of provinces but a brothel!—in thee thy living men exist not without war and of those whom one wall and one moat shut in, one gnaws the other. Search, wretched one, around its shores, thy seaboard, and then look within thy bosom, if any part in thee enjoys peace. What avails it for thee that Justinian readjusted the bridle, if the saddle be empty? . . . O German Albert, who has forsaken her that has become untamed and savage, and oughtest to bestride her saddle-bows, may a just judgment from the stars fall upon thy blood, and may it be so strange and manifest, that thy successor may have fear thereat! . . . Come to see thy Rome, that weeps, widowed and alone, and cries day and night: 'My Cæsar,

wherefore dost thou not keep me company?' Come to see how the people love one another; and if no pity move thee, come to be ashamed for thy own renown! And if it be lawful for me, O Supreme Jove, who was on Earth crucified for us, are thy just eyes turned aside elsewhere?"

He begins with a prayer about servitude and tempest, and concludes the opening theme of this brief symphony of all the horrors that may befall, with brotheldom. Then follows a passage containing the most terrible, hence the truest, description of civil war ever composed. From this there comes a change to the theme, "there is no peace," and the transcendent wail of the closing passage, there is nobody to see that the laws are carried out, though the laws exist, thanks to the Emperor Justinian who, hundreds of years before, had had those laws codified and arranged so that they could be used. The lamentation dies down a little, and becomes an almost intimate appeal to the Emperor himself, Albert of Hapsburg, who has not even taken the trouble to go to Rome to receive the papal sanction, and the crown, though he has already two years borne the great title. Then follows a quiet complaint which recites the low state to which are fallen the glorious names of the great families of former times in Italy, weeping—"the garden of the empire become desert"—and from this rises to a tremen-

dous pitch of misery when Rome in the person of the Pope declares herself widowed because her rightful spouse, the Emperor, has deserted her. Finally the crashing finale, a prayer to Christ.

There are few passages like it in all literature, and those, in Job or Jeremiah, Revelations, or the sermons of Savonarola. The only touch of fear, and pain, and hopeless dread, which is left out of this apostrophe to Italy and to the Empire in the name of the Emperor, that stinging irony, which can alone whip spiritual flesh with scorpions, is added in the apostrophe to Florence which immediately follows. It begins in pathos—"My Florence!"—then changes to the bitterest irony ever worded by human tongue —"Surely thou mayest be content with this digression, which does not touch thee— Now make thee glad, thou that hast such reason; thou rich, thou at peace, thou wise!" And then the sorrowful closing passage full of tenderness. "And if thou mind thee well and see the light, thou wilt see thyself resembling that sick woman, who can not find repose upon the feathers, but with her tossing seeks to relieve her pain."

VITA NUOVA

To understand the story of *The Divine Comedy* it is necessary to know a few facts out of which came the inspiration for Dante's first venture in letters; facts that were the cause of the loveliest story of

boy and girl love which the world possesses. When Dante was nine years old he fell in love with a girl of eight. Her name was Beatrice. From that time on, to her death in 1290, life for Dante seemed a regeneration. The relations between these two lovers were never less than distant, consisting, at most, of glances and a few salutations. The boy, bashful and diffident, sought only clandestine glimpses of his beloved. Away from her he wrote verses in the praise of her, and of love, and of all heavenly qualities and things to which her coming into his life had introduced him. These verses, with short intermingled passages of prose, he put together and named *Vita Nuova,* "The New Life."

In 1289 Dante wrote the twenty-sixth chapter of this book about his Beatrice and love. No part is more exquisite in itself, or more typical of a whole which should never be read but as a whole, than the page of prose and the sonnet which together form Chapter XXVI. The following translation is by Charles Eliot Norton:

"I say that she showed herself so gentle and so full of all pleasantness, that those who looked on her comprehended in themselves a pure and sweet delight, such as they could not after tell in words; nor was there any who might look upon her but that at first he needs must sigh. These and more admirable things proceeded from her admirably, and with

power. Wherefore I, thinking upon this, desiring to resume the style of her praise, resolved to say words in which I would set forth her admirable and excellent influences, to the end that not only those who might actually behold her, but also others, should know of her whatever words could tell. Then I devised this sonnet:—

"So gentle and so gracious doth appear
My lady when she giveth her salute,
That every tongue becometh, trembling, mute;
Nor do the eyes to look upon her dare.

"Although she hears her praises, she doth go
Benignly vested with humility;
And like a thing come down, she seems to be,
From heaven to earth, a miracle to show.

"So pleaseth she whoever cometh nigh,
She gives the heart a sweetness through the eyes,
Which none can understand who doth not prove.
And from her countenance there seems to move
A spirit sweet and in Love's very guise,
Who to the soul, in going, sayeth: Sigh!"

Three chapters further on, the tone of rapt and innocent joy in life and love changes, and the fearful and unanswerable question of death is raised. In Dante's own words, "the Lord of Justice called this most gentle one to glory." Beatrice died, as has been said, in 1290. The twenty-ninth chapter of *The New Life* announces her death. Its caption is from Lamentations. "How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! How is she become as a widow! she that was great among the

nations." Like Judah, Dante had "gone into captivity because of affliction;" like her he finds himself "in bitterness." After this he continues his *New Life* with brief passages of the prose of simple affliction, and the verse of simple grief. Like Judah he finds "no rest." With the forty-third chapter of the little book its author breaks off so abruptly as to make it seem almost petulant. He is as a matter of fact full of petulancy at his own inability to express his feelings for his lost love. In this final chapter, in length but a short paragraph, he registers a vow, and sets up an ideal. These are the connecting links in the chain of cause and effect that finally brought *The Divine Comedy* into existence. To *The Divine Comedy, The New Life* is the poet's own introduction.

This introduction, *The New Life,* is simple in the sense that a child's life, happy or unhappy, is simple. *The Divine Comedy* is complex, vastly so, in the sense that an active-minded, active-handed man's life is complex. Yet *The Comedy* too is simple; simple in the sense in which all great works of art are simple, *i. e.,* single, sincere, direct—endowed with singleness of aim. As in nature, so in Dante's art, whether the subject is simple or complex, it is never confused. The solar system is not confused though it is complex, and vast, beyond human comprehension. The bloom of chickweed is not simple for the reason that it is small. And so with these

works of Dante, though one is simple, even slight, and the other is complex, and of an intellectual and poetic inclusiveness far beyond any save a bare handful of the most glorious works, neither is confused. Complexity and simplicity are relative terms when properly applied to the works of nature, or the works of art. Confused is an absolute term when properly used in regard to art, and is truly descriptive of works of inferior art only. To the works of nature it is not applicable at all. It is ignorance alone that confounds the complex with the confused, whether in art or in nature, that on which art must be forever based, and to which art must be forever true. What art, matters not the least.

We must read, mark, and inwardly digest, the last simple chapter of *The New Life*. We must remember the vow, and grasp the ideal, therein registered and set up, if we wish to derive true pleasure, through true understanding, from the poem to which it is the introduction. The translation of this chapter again is Norton's:

"After this sonnet, a wonderful vision appeared to me, in which I saw things which made me resolve to speak no more of this blessed one, until I could more worthily treat of her. And to attain this, I study to the utmost of my power, as she truly knows. So that, if it shall please Him through whom all things live, that my life be prolonged for some

years, I hope to say of her what was never said of any woman.

"And then may it please Him who is the Lord of Grace, that my soul may go to behold the glory of its lady, namely, of that blessed Beatrice, who in glory looks upon the face of Him *qui est per omnia saecula benedictus* (who is blessed forever)."

Dante's ideal was to learn to write in such a way as would enable him to express his thought about Beatrice with satisfaction to himself, hence, to others, the entirety of its fervor and depth. His vow was to say no more of Beatrice until he could say of her, "what was never said of any woman." He did both these things, and to this day he stands in the foremost rank of the few men of all time who have succeeded in doing either of these things; alone, and above all men in having done both of these things.

THE POEM AND ITS STYLE

The Divine Comedy is a great poem and a great play in one, not meant as a play to be acted in the ordinary sense, but as a poem, meant in reading, to present its characters to the mind of the reader, as the characters of a play present themselves in acting to the audience. In order that the effect of a play may be produced on the reader's mind, Dante incorporates full stage directions, and the most com-

plete account of the stage setting, in the body of the work itself. Furthermore, without a suggestion of meaning to do so, he keeps the reader always aware of the time of every scene and act.

His play, *The Divine Comedy,* is divided into three acts and one hundred scenes; three books, to speak of it as a poem, and one hundred cantos.

Its most remarkable characteristic is what may be called convincingness. Lowell said, "We read *The Comedy* as a record of fact." In the sense of presenting convincing facts, *The Comedy* is beyond all other literary works convincing; convincing as *Paradise Lost* is not. "We read *Paradise Lost* as a poem, the *Comedia* as a record of fact, and no one," continues Lowell, "can read Dante without believing his story, for it is plain that he believed it himself. It is false æsthetics to confound the grandiose with the imaginative." It is by the word imaginative that Lowell describes the spiritual raison d'être for the unique quality of *The Divine Comedy.* Emerson, who understood this as clearly as Lowell, pointed out with equal clearness what may be called its unique physical raison d'être—when he added to the statement that Dante is "all wings, pure imagination," this other statement, "he wrote like Euclid."

"Imagination bodies forth the forms of things unknown . . . and gives to airy nothing a local habitation and a name." It is precisely this that the author of *Midsummer Night's Dream* did, thereby

making the unreal, real; the impossible, in the sense of what never was, appear possible, and convincing; just this that saved Shakespeare, as it saved Dante, from ever becoming grandiose; just this that must forever link their names together; just this that led Carlyle to call them "a peculiar two."

To write like Euclid is the same as giving to the figures and the places of imagination, "a local habitation and a name." It is the ultimate secret of all great art. By it comes the last touch of worth which human genius can bestow on works of art—that simplicity which proves that the artist had creative imagination together with complete mastery of expression—simplicity, which in this sense is the synonym for, and the witness of, style. Style is the quality of a work of art that makes visible, audible, in a word, understandable, the quality of an artist's very soul. Wagner in his autobiography makes the meaning of style clear when he tells of sending a copy of his Nibelungen poem to Schopenhauer, for whom he had tremendous admiration, but with whom he had no personal acquaintance. He says: "To its title I merely added the words 'with reverence,' but without writing a single word to Schopenhauer himself. This I did partly from a feeling of great shyness in addressing him, and partly because I felt that if the perusal of my poem did not enlighten Schopenhauer about the man with whom he was dealing, a letter from me—no matter how

explicit—would not help him much." Here is the very essence of the meaning of style! That quality in a work of art which declares its author, as Milton thought the universe declared its Creator.

THE STORY OF THE DIVINE COMEDY

Condensed to the briefest terms the story of *The Divine Comedy* is this. When Beatrice had been ten years dead, *i. e.,* 1300 A. D., Dante represents himself as making his famous journey. "Midway in the course of my life," at thirty-five years of age, going on the assumption that the psalmist was right in setting the years of man at three score and ten, when half his days were spent, Dante found himself gone astray, even lost. We need not discuss the meaning of astray and lost as Dante applies these words to himself. He may have meant morally, in the sense of "gone to the dogs," or he may have meant spiritually, in the sense of "following after false gods." He may have meant, and probably did, both. It is not necessary to pry into the particulars of his having gone astray and finding himself, as he says, "in a dark wood, where the right way was lost." That he was speaking both literally and figuratively may be fairly assumed. The all-important point is that he had lost his moorings on the sea of life, and was being driven before the gusts of passion which shipwreck so many men; that he was himself in imminent peril of shipwreck.

At this point, Beatrice, who has carried her love for Dante into Paradise, sees his straits and sets about to succor him; to set him right once more, and so bring about his ultimate salvation. Here is the whole story, the love of Beatrice in Heaven, for her mortal lover, left behind, and fallen on evil days, working out his regeneration. To do this Beatrice gets permission to descend into that part of Hell where Virgil is. This is a place where the only form of suffering inflicted upon the upright and virtuous heathen is that of being cut off from beholding God for the reason that they had not worshiped Him, and this, because they had lived and died before He revealed Himself to the world, hence through no fault of theirs. When she arrives in this "easiest room in Hell," to use the applicable words of Michael Wigglesworth, she singles out Virgil and asks him to play the part of guide to her friend, Dante, and show him the horror which encompasses the damned; the sufferings which those who repent in time must undergo in order to wash themselves of sin and be finally fit for Heaven. The joys of Paradise she herself will later show Dante. Virgil was chosen because he was regarded as the supreme example of human wisdom, and the supreme master of verbal expression; because he was a poet, a transcendent poet, one possessed of the "breath and finer spirit of all knowledge."

Virgil, in the second canto of Hell, having agreed

to guide Dante, tells him the story of Beatrice coming to him. He says, "A blessed and beautiful lady called me in such fashion that I sought her to command. Her eyes were brighter than the stars, and she began to say in low, sweet tones, an angel's voice: 'O courteous Mantuan spirit! whose fame yet lasts on Earth, and shall till the end of time, a friend of mine, but not of fortune, is so hindered (has the world so much with him), that I fear I may be already too late with help. Now do thou move, and with thy skilful speech, and with whatever is needed for his deliverance, aid him, so that I may be consoled. I am Beatrice who make thee go. I came from a place wither I desire to return.' Love moved me. It makes me speak."

Virgil tells Beatrice that he will do as she asks. Thereupon he goes forth from the place where he is, and finds Dante, who has lost his way in the dark wood, the story of which forms the very beginning of the first canto of *The Divine Comedy.* Virgil offers to lead Dante through the underworld, and up the steeps of Purgatory as far as it will be permitted him to go, *i. e.,* to the confines of the Earthly Paradise, which is on the mountain of Purgatory, and that place where all is, as it was before the Fall. Into this place Virgil can not enter. On the threshold of it he leaves Dante to await the coming of Beatrice, who is to guide him through the Earthly and the Heavenly Paradise. The parting of

Virgil and Dante takes place at the close of the twenty-seventh canto of Purgatory. The scene is one of incomparable loveliness and simplicity. Virgil says, "The temporal fire and the eternal"—meaning the sufferings and punishment of Purgatory, which have their allotted term, and those other sufferings and punishments of Hell, which are without end—"thou hast seen, son, and now thou art come to a place where of myself I discern no farther." Virgil means that he himself has sufficient powers of intellect to guide Dante along the crooked ways and through the hard places of Hell and Purgatory, but that he lacks the light of divine grace which alone can enable any one to tread the paths of Paradise. He tells Dante that he has brought him so far with the help of his own understanding and art, in a word, intellectual power. "Forth art thou," says Virgil, "from the steep ways, forth art thou from the narrow. Expect no more or word or sign from me. Free, upright, and sound is thine own will, and it would be wrong not to act according to its dictate: wherefore thee over thyself I crown and mitre."

The point is this. Dante, a man still in the flesh, sinful and unrepentant, hence certain of Hell, should he die, is, through the special favor of Heaven granted to his once earthly but now heavenly lover, permitted to make a pilgrimage through Hell and

Purgatory. This journey, which is his warning, proves to be his salvation, because he takes heed. The events and sights of this journey he records for the warning and salvation of all men throughout time, who may be living in sin, unrepentant, as he was. The record is *The Divine Comedy*. It shows what happens to the damned in Hell; them whose case is hopeless. It shows what happens to penitents in Purgatory; them whose case has hope in it, though their actual condition in Purgatory is not less fearful than that of souls in Hell. The essential difference between the two lies in the temporal character of one, and the eternal character of the other.

Finally, *The Divine Comedy* describes the state of the blessed in Paradise. This is the third part of the record. The journey Dante made through the Earthly and the Heavenly Paradise, with Beatrice as guide, is described. To be fit to undertake this last stage he had to represent himself as purged of all sin, and that is the meaning of Virgil's parting words, "thee over thyself I crown and mitre." In effect, Virgil says to Dante, "You have but to go your own way now to go right; you can not choose but follow the guide who will soon come to you. You can not desire to go elsewhere than she leads you." This guide is, as we know, Beatrice. The realm through which she leads her lover is Paradise.

THE STAGE

The universe as conceived of by thirteenth century Christianity was not complex, because it was regarded as consisting of certain definite parts, put together in a certain fashion, and recognized as having fixed limits. Its cosmography was clearly outlined in the minds of educated men of that day. Let us not forget for a moment that Dante was preeminently such a man; one who had mastered the sum of human knowledge, the "omne scibile" as it was then called. The reason why the medieval idea of the universe often seems so complex is because of the numerous, almost endless subdivisions which men were constantly imposing upon what to start with was a really simple and logical scheme. The complexity, and resulting indefiniteness of the medieval conception, was due to endless dividing of a known quantity, a universe accepted as a known fact. The complexity and indefiniteness of our modern conception of the universe is due to the removal of all ideas of limitation; to the prevalent notions of worlds without number. This accounts for the vague character of Milton's cosmography. He had the modern point of view in this regard, as compared with the concise and exact character of Dante's ideas. For Dante, when he came to write *The Divine Comedy,* the universe was a ready prepared stage, known to many men, and hence sure

to be intelligible to many of his readers. Heaven, Hell and Purgatory, had as clearly marked positions in the thirteenth-century universe as Europe, Asia and Africa have on a terrestrial globe of the present day.

The universe which forms the stage for *The Divine Comedy* consisted of four great provinces, so to speak: Earth, the province of living men; Hell, the province of the dead who are eternally damned; Purgatory, the province of the dead who, because they repented while still alive, expiate their sins with the knowledge that when the slate is clean they shall enter Heaven; Paradise, the province of the elect; those who, soon or late in reaching Heaven, are, from the instant of their arrival there, fixed in an abode of everlasting blessedness. *The Divine Comedy* is acted, so to speak, in the three last of these provinces—Hell, Purgatory, Paradise. In other words, the stage is set in three different places, but each of these places was as clearly defined in the minds of Dante's contemporaries as the banqueting hall of Cardinal Wolsey's palace at Hampton Court is a fixed place in the mind of a present-day American who knows Shakespeare's *Henry VIII,* be he reader, or theater-goer, or both. To read *The Divine Comedy* intelligently, it is necessary to have a clear conception of the stage, which means knowing where one is at any given time. To get such a conception is by no means as difficult as many suppose.

The Earth, thought of as a globe, was the accepted center of the universe. The northern hemisphere was land; the southern, water. Jerusalem was situated at what we think of as the North Pole, just half-way between the River Ganges, to the east, and the Straits of Gibraltar, to the west. Hell was within the Earth; Purgatory outside; Paradise above. This needs explanation.

Hell was a vast funnel-shaped hole, the nozzle of which was at the center of the Earth, and the top, a great circular opening, the center of which was just under Jerusalem, at the North Pole. Lucifer had his seat at the center of gravity, where he stopped falling, i. e., at the center of the Earth, or apex of Hell. The reason for this, as well as the shape and location of Hell, was perfectly plain to Dante. It was this. At the time when the hostile angels rebelled against God, their leader, Lucifer, was thrown out of Heaven and fell to Earth. The Earth drew back in horror, and the hole so produced made Hell, as it has already been described. At the same time the water of the northern hemisphere all ran to the south. Thus the northern hemisphere came to be land, and the southern, water.

Purgatory was a high cone-shaped mountain to be thought of, as we should say, at the South Pole. The top of this mountain was occupied by the Earthly Paradise, or Eden. It appears to have been

a matter of arbitrary choice on Dante's part in placing the Earthly Paradise, or Eden, at the top of the mountain of Purgatory. Hitherto it had been located in Asia. As a matter of the logical structure of his stage, this crowning Purgatory with Eden, is a stroke of genius quite in keeping with the genius of Dante which makes itself apparent at so many points throughout the structure of his colossal work.

The reason why Purgatory was at the South Pole, and was cone-shaped, could be clearly explained by Dante and his age. When the Earth drew back before the falling Lucifer, and the void of Hell was formed, some arrangement had to be made for the dislodged material. This material, as it were, flowed out through the nozzle of the funnel of Hell, the nozzle being thought of as a pipe-like continuation of the apex of Hell, straight through to the opposite side, the South Pole. At this point, the South Pole, the material dislodged during the formation of the funnel, i. e., Hell, within the body of the Earth, was piled without, or *upon* the body of the Earth, in a cone-shaped mountain. This mountain, which was Purgatory, had the same form as Hell, but reversed, the apex of the former being up, whereas that of the latter was down. This mountain stood in the midst of the waters of the southern hemisphere. As Dante, for his purposes, changed the orthodox location of the Earthly Paradise from Asia to the top

of the sea-girt mountain, so he also changed the orthodox location of Purgatory, which was underground, or inside the Earth, to a place outside.

We now come to the third part of Dante's great universal stage, the Heavens and all therein. First, Dante thought of the world, as we speak of it today, in its four primal elements of earth, water, air and fire. The globe consisted of earth and water as they appear to the sense of sight. This was encased in two hollow hemispheres, the inner, that next the Earth, being air; the outer, that beyond the air, fire. If we now keep in mind this globe of earth and water, air and fire, as a distinct unit, a sphere unit, fixed and motionless, we shall have the essential fact, or information, around which to construct a clear idea of Dante's universe.

Surrounding this spheral unit, the Earth, there are nine concentric hollow hemispheres. These are the Heavens. Each bears the name of the particular heavenly body which occupies it. All whirl around the Earth as a center. The sphere nearest the Earth moves slowest. In order, as these spheres are removed from the Earth, in other words, as they are nearer the throne of God which is at the heart of Paradise, the faster they whirl. In order outward, from the Earth, come the Heavens of the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, of Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, and finally of the Fixed Stars. Outside of the Heaven of the Fixed Stars is the Primum Mobile,

or the First Moving Heaven. Beyond this ninth Heaven, the ninth of these hollow, concentric, whirling hemispheres, was Space, the Empyrean, where time was not, nor matter, nor motion, but where from the beginning God was, and where with Him forever dwell His angels and His elect.

Having reached the Empyrean we are close upon the nine so-called circles of Paradise, nine concentric circles, or as they are usually called, the Heavenly Hierarchy, which forever swing about the point at which God is throned from everlasting to everlasting. The circle nearest God moves fastest. The circle farthest away moves slowest. Their motion is caused by the joy and complete satisfaction which comes of being placed by Him, each at due distance from Him. Desire to be at one with God, and the perfect accord with His will in establishing degrees of distance for each circle, lead the creatures inhabiting these circles, really the circles themselves, to move ceaselessly around Him. This was the medieval way of accounting for the origin and continuance of the motion of the circles or Heavenly Hierarchy. Beginning with the Seraphs, who were nearest to God, the nine orders of creatures which composed this Hierarchy were, in degree of their distance from the center, and in direction outward, beginning with the Seraphs who were nearest to God—Cherubs, Thrones, Dominions, Virtues, Powers, Princes, Archangels and Angels. The

general name for these creatures was Intelligences, and through them the influence of God was conveyed to the Heavens. Through this occult influence, and by the unseen agency of the Intelligences, the Heavens were set whirling about the Earth. The Heavens, in turn, through occult influence and hidden power, affected the Earth itself, and brought about all changes such as the birth, growth and death of animals and plants, and exerted control over the lives and dispositions of men.

A homely and simple experiment in construction will make Dante's stage, the universe, as he conceived of it, clear to any one who finds the foregoing description puzzling. All that is necessary in making the experiment or demonstration is an apple, a bit of cardboard and a string. We will begin with the Heavenly Hierarchy. Cut the cardboard to a round and put the string through the center, knotting it so that the cardboard will remain in place. Draw nine concentric circles about the point where the string pierces the round card. The point of piercing will represent the place where God is, and the nine rings on the card the nine Intelligences, from inner Seraphs to outer Angels.

Next we will make Hell and Purgatory in their proper relations to Paradise. First, Hell. Pierce the apple with the string (a needle will help), taking the string in where the stem was, and out where the flower was. These two points will represent the

North and South Poles, respectively, on the apple, which represents the Earth. With a sharp pen-knife cut out as nearly as can be a cone-shaped piece of apple—the base of this cone being a circle around the place where the string enters the apple, and the apex of the cone at the center of the apple. Remove this and the cavity which it leaves will represent Hell, the apex of which is at the center of the Earth—the center of the apple.

Now take the cut-out cone of apple and put the string in at the middle of its base, and bring it out as near as possible to the point. Then slide the cone up the string until the base is close to the apple. Knot the string for sake of security. This cone, the exact counterpart of Hell, only reversed, will represent the mountain of Purgatory, at the top, or point of which, was Dante's Earthly Paradise.

Imagination must help complete the experiment. The nine Heavens we may picture as nine concentric, transparent spheres enclosing the apple, or Earth. These whirl individually around the Earth and in each is set sun, moon, or planet as already described.

Looking at our model we should now fix in mind a few further points. A line drawn about the apple half-way between the poles and at right angles to the string will represent the Equator. The northern hemisphere is to be thought of as land—the opening to Hell as crusted over and forming a part of the

Earth's surface. On this crust, Jerusalem. The southern hemisphere is water out of the midst of which rises Purgatory, whose summit, the Earthly Paradise, pierces the Heavens and is above the reach of atmospheric disturbance of any kind; hence the unchanging perfection of its climate. In its main masses, and in their distribution, as has been described, was Dante's idea of the universe—the stage of his great drama *La Divina Commedia.*

THE ACTORS[1]

No question is more natural than that asked by a reader when he first takes up *The Divine Comedy*: "What are these people, these ghosts of men and women, these creatures that talk like human beings but are not flesh, or subject to gravity, or any other of the laws which condition matter, what are they; what did Dante think they were, they whom he met, and talked with, in the trifold realm of the other world; they whose talk he reports in *The Comedy?*" It is easy to say that they were disembodied spirits, ghosts, or the like, but this answer will be a bit too vague to satisfy an insistent and really intelligent questioner. At least, if we say disembodied spirits, ghosts, we are in duty bound to make our own ideas about them plain; as far as possible, Dante's idea about them. It is, as Voltaire said, necessary to define terms. Defining the ghosts, or ghostly personages who inhabited Dante's

[1] See Purgatory, XXV: page 218.

other world, may be done by calling him or her, as the case may be, the spiritual essence, or forma of that same him or her when in the flesh, and upon Earth. The word forma meant, as used in Dante's time, the intangible but shaping principle which gives men and women the guise by which they are known in life. An analogy may help us at this point. If we turn on the gas, but do not ignite it, we see nothing. If we touch a match to the gas we see a flame of given shape. The unlighted body of gas, invisible and intangible, when ignited becomes a visible and recognizable object of fixed dimensions, a flame. We know that the body of gas is the shaping principle of the flame. Just so with man. The forma, a ghost, comes into the field of mortal vision, and is made evident, when, for a time, it is "clothed on" or clad with flesh. At death this flesh drops away, but the forma, the formative principle so to speak, though returned to the realm of the unseen and the intangible, remains, and the man becomes a ghost. These ghosts are the denizens of the other world; of Hell, Purgatory and Paradise, and are always to be met there though not here—at least not commonly, according to the prevailing notions of the twentieth century. The fundamental conception of Dante's ghosts or spiritual inhabitants of the other world is based upon, and most intimately related to, the Christian scheme of immortality. Dante's idea of the forma, the ghost,

i. e., the essential and indestructible part of a man, is set forth nowhere more plainly than in the eighth chapter and the third book of Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus,* the last paragraphs of which chapter can not be read with too much care by any one, who, on taking up *The Divine Comedy,* asks himself the question, "What manner of folk were they whom Dante met, saw and conversed with on his journey through the other world?"

"Nature, which is the Time-vesture of God, and reveals Him to the wise, hides Him from the foolish. . . . I say, sweep away the illusion of Time; compress the three score years into three minutes; . . . Are we not spirits, that are shaped into a body, into an Appearance; and that fade away again into air and Invisibility? This is no metaphor, it is a simple scientific *fact;* we start out of Nothingness, take figure, and are Apparitions; round us, as round the veriest Spectre, is Eternity; and to Eternity minutes are as years and æons.

"O Heaven, it is mysterious, it is awful to consider that we not only carry each a future Ghost within Him; but are in very deed, Ghosts! These Limbs, whence had we them; this stormy Force; this life-blood with its burning Passion? They are dust and shadow; a Shadow-system gathered round our Me; wherein, through some moments or years, the Divine Essence is to be revealed in the Flesh.

"Generation after generation takes to itself the Form of a Body; and forth-issuing from Cimmerian Night, on Heaven's mission *appears* . . . and then the Heaven-sent is recalled; his earthly Vesture falls away, and soon even to sense becomes a vanished Shadow."

It is this Shadow which was before our birth, which is the *reality* of our mundane existence, which shall be our ghost after we have left the world, eternal in Hell or Heaven, this Shadow of Carlyle's, Carlyle's Ghost within us—it was this, and countless millions of them, whom Dante saw on his journey through the regions of the dead.

TIME IN THE DIVINE COMEDY

Throughout the poem Dante is most precise as to the day, and hour of the day, on which, and at which, events recorded, took place. As with the detail of places, and minute particulars concerning scenes and persons represented, so with time, the poet is most punctilious about rendering every line in such a way as to produce a sense of reality in the reader's mind; that sense of literary reality which only the very greatest men ever succeed in producing. He would never have his reader lose faith for the length of a single line in the awful and beautiful reality of the regions beyond death where all men are meeting, or shall meet, their just deserts. In his own mind there was no vagueness

as to when an event occurred, nor where, nor how. In his manner of presentation there is no vagueness or dimness of touch about anything or anybody referred to. The result is a corresponding lack of vagueness in his reader's mind.

The poem opens on Good Friday in the year 1300, and it was on the evening of the same Good Friday that Dante, with Virgil, entered Hell. They issued forth from Hell a little before sunrise on the following Sunday, Easter morning. At noon on the following Wednesday, Dante, with Beatrice, entered Paradise. Thus in the darkness of approaching night he went down to Hell. At the hopeful hour of dawn he came to Purgatory. With the meridian splendor of high noon he passed up into Paradise. In the choice of all three of these times the poetic intention is, of course, obvious. Lesser divisions of time, and precise reference to hours are marked throughout the poem by repeated mention of the position of the sun and stars.

FREEDOM OF THE WILL THE CORNER-STONE OF DANTE'S BELIEF

Dante attributed all things in Heaven and Earth to Love. With him, as with St. Paul, it was the uttermost force, the force by which all that is, can be transfigured. Because of the love that was in Him; because He "is love," did God create all that

He created. The idea is that He wanted to share His own supreme good with others, inanimate things and animals; living beings, men and angels. As He created all these He made them all alike, i. e., each, in its own kind, perfect. There was no possibility for wrong because there was no *choice* on the part of any thing or creature. This was the state of man in Eden, the Earthly Paradise. Nothing—mankind, animal, thing—under this condition had individuality, because individuality implies action which is the result of the power to make a choice. This right to choose, what is called freedom of the will, God then bestowed on men and angels, only two ranks of His creatures. Beatrice in Paradise says to Dante, "The greatest gift which God in His bounty bestowed in creating . . . and that which He prizes most, was the freedom of the will, with which the creatures that have intelligence (men and angels) they all and they alone, were and are endowed."

Thus, endowed with the right to choose, and with love, men and angels become capable of sin which is nothing more than the desire or love for what is not good, i. e., not in accord with the will of God. So, when God made men and angels free to sin, they responded, Adam and Lucifer, and for their sins suffered expulsion from Eden, and expulsion from Paradise, because, with the gift of free will, God stipulated for an absolute personal liabil-

ity for the choice made. You shall act as you like, and, if you do wrong, you shall suffer. If you repent of your sins in time, literally in time, i. e., before you die, before you quit time for eternity, you shall be allowed to work out a due punishment in Purgatory, and when this is done, you shall go to the realms of the blest, Paradise. If, however, you do not repent before death, i. e., in time, you shall go to Hell forever. This, in brief, is the system on which Dante represents God as dealing with mankind, a system implying perfect freedom to act with unswerving consequences following on every act, the least as well as the greatest.

TWO WAYS OF READING THE DIVINE COMEDY

In *The Divine Comedy* Dante relates an imaginative experience, but he couches that experience in the terms of every-day reality. There are two ways in which this experience may be read. One, as an exceedingly interesting narrative of men and women in strange regions, suffering under, or delighting in, the just rewards of their various sins and virtues, and the varying degrees of each. Dante visits these men and women and talks with them, gathering information about their different states, and the places they are in. This material he uses as the substance of the narrative of his poem. Now these people are the dead, and the places in which he visits

them are Hell, Purgatory and Paradise. Their conditioning is that of just reward. In a word, Dante describes his journey to the other world as made by him, while still in the flesh. The other world is that eternal dwelling place where unfleshed humanity has what is usually called its "future life." Although the experiences of his journey, like the journey itself, are all figments of his mind, he makes each one of them seem true and real because he believed in them, and possessed the power to clothe his belief in that seeming reality which is the rare and precious gift of great art. A child can read the story of this journey and never suspect that the characters are other than live men and women moving about in real places. This is the way that one should first read *The Divine Comedy*—read it for the story, and get acquainted with the characters. The second way of reading it should not be attempted until one has made himself moderately conversant with the simple, straightforward narrative, and the places visited. Every one of these is a marvel of description. This way of reading implies the discovery of the inner and the true purpose of the poem; its significance as an exposition of the moral laws governing human life.

Thus and so, on purpose, and for attaining desired ends, do men act. Record of this action forms the narrative. As this action is good or bad, and in just such degrees as it is good or bad, does an ab-

solutely just God mete out punishment or reward. The moral significance of the poem is cast in the form of an absolutely consistent allegory, hence a most unusual and most wonderful allegory. This allegory runs from beginning to end, unbroken; a matter of intense and illusive interest, at one time quite apparent and on the surface; at another, concealed deep within the body of description and narrative. It proceeds like an underlying theme in a symphony. It appears and disappears, but is always present, like the dominant idea in a Greek tragedy. It persists like a paramount bias toward honesty or dishonesty throughout the life of a man, present to the end, whether easily seen or only discoverable with utmost difficulty. The story or narrative is the vehicle of the allegory, and includes the allegory, but of the two the allegory is the more important because it is the essential part. It is the part which tells us, when we grasp it, what is common to all men in all ages, namely, the moral bearings of their existence upon this Earth, and the unavoidable consequences of their acts, whereas the narrative tells us only what happens to specific persons. The narrative deals with the state of individuals. The allegory deals with the eternal conditions of the human type. Mankind is the type. Men are the individuals. The narrative, the description, and the talk of the actors in *The Divine Comedy* make up its body. The allegory is the soul of that

body. No words can set forth all this as clearly as Dante's own. They are from a letter addressed to a nobleman of Verona to whom part of *The Comedy* was dedicated. "The subject is the state of the soul after death, simply considered. But allegorically taken, its subject is man, according as by his good or ill deserts he renders himself liable to the reward or punishment of justice."

The attraction of *The Divine Comedy,* for every new generation, lies in the fact that it contains a fascinating and lively story of daily life as lived by all men and all women at all times; a story of love and hate and all of action which they beget. The permanent value of *The Divine Comedy* lies in the fact that it is a vivid exposition of the essence of life. It is an exposition of that which constitutes the joy and the sorrow of existence as represented by the uninterrupted succession of generations, that ceaseless stream of life which we recognize in the unending births and never ending deaths of individuals.

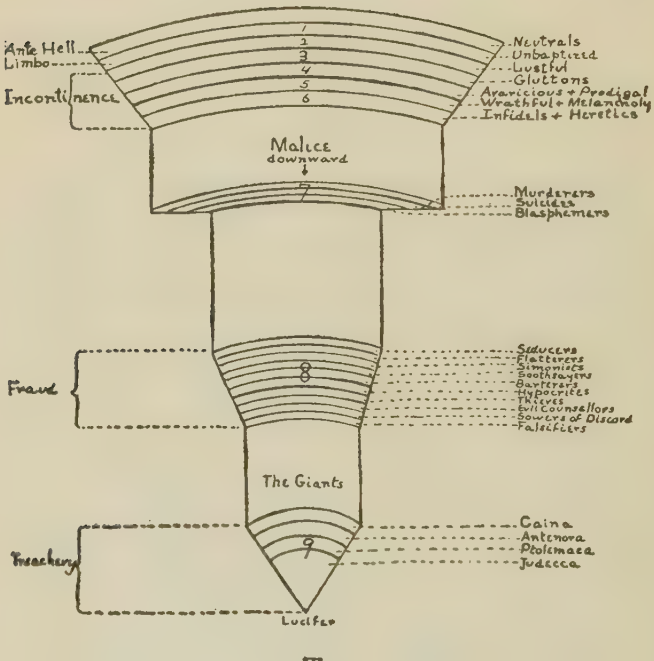
THE DIVINE COMEDY

HELL

CANTO I

The opening scene of *The Divine Comedy* is laid in a gloomy wood at the foot of a steep hill. It is in this place that Dante represents himself as gone astray, and unable to find the right path. He is terrified by the sudden appearance of a lion, a wolf and a leopard. The place, as well as the three beasts, is to be taken allegorically. The place means this world, gone wrong, and so gone, because of the proneness of human nature to yield before the temptations of pride (the lion), greed (the wolf), and lust (the leopard). Jeremiah v: 6, "A lion out of the forest shall slay them, and a wolf of the evenings shall spoil them, a leopard shall watch over their cities; every one that goeth out thence shall be torn in pieces." At this moment of need the shade of Virgil, in accord with the will of God, and the request of Beatrice, appears, and the drama opens. It is the greatest of problem plays; problem set and problem solved, human yielding, and human resistance to pride, greed, lust—the

final outcome of each here on Earth, and in the world to come.



HELL

When half my days were spent I found myself in a dark wood, and off the right path. Ah me! how hard it is to picture that forest, wild, difficult, and misleading, the mere thought of which brings

back terror! So bitter was it that death seems little worse. But to make plain the good of it all to me, I will tell what I saw there.

I can not say precisely how I came into this forest, so dulled were my senses at the moment when I turned from the true way. At all events after I had reached the foot of a hill where the heart-piercing and fearful valley ended, I looked up, and saw its summit and high shoulders gleaming in the light of the sun which leads men right along every road.

After resting my weary body a little I again set forth upon the barren hillside, the firm foot always the lower. And, behold! almost at the beginning of my climb there appeared a she-leopard, lithe, and very nimble, with spotted skin. She did not make way for me, nay, blocked my road so that many times I thought to turn back.

The time was early morning, and the Sun was rising along with the stars that were with Him when Divine Love first set those beautiful things in motion; so that the hour and the season gave me good hope of prevailing over the wild beast with the spotted hide. But it was different when a lion appeared and drew near, ravenous with hunger, tossing his head, so that the very air trembled with fright; and then a she-wolf which in her leanness seemed naught but a creature of hunger, and before this time to have made wretched the lives of many

men. She filled my heart with such heavy forebodings, that I lost hope of reaching the hill top.

DANTE NOW FALLS BACK A LITTLE

While I was on my downward way, one who seemed to have lost the use of his voice through long silence appeared. I cried:

"Have pity! whatever you are, whether ghost or living man."

VIRGIL

"Not man, though once I was a man, and my parents were Lombards, and each a citizen of Mantua. I was born in the time of Julius, though late, and I lived at Rome in the day of false and untrue gods. I was a poet and I sang of that just son of Anchises who left Troy after proud Ilion had been burned. But you, why do you return to trouble? Why do you not climb the pleasant hill which is the source and cause of every joy?"

DANTE

"Are you then that Virgil and that fount which pours forth so broad a stream of speech? O honor and light of the other poets! may the long study and the great love now serve me which led me to search your writings. You are my master and my model; you alone are he from whom I took the beautiful

style that has brought me praise. Behold the beast which made me turn; help me to overcome her."[1]

VIRGIL

"It behooves you to change your course if you wish to escape from this wild place. Wherefore I will be your guide and lead you through eternal Hell where you shall hear shrieks of despair, and see the unhappy spirits of old time who one and all invoke the second death.[2] And then you shall see those who are contented in penitential fire because they hope to be gathered ultimately to the blest, to whom, if you would ascend, there shall be a soul to guide you worthier than I. With her will I leave you; for that Emperor who reigns thereabove denies, because I was not compliant to His law[3] that through me any one should enter His city. There He reigns and everywhere governs. There is His city and His lofty throne. O happy soul whom He thereto elects!"

DANTE

"Poet, I implore you, by that God whom you

[1] The lion, symbol of pride.

[2] Either those who express a wish for annihilation, or those who proclaim "the second death," meaning the state of the damned after the last judgment, when they shall be reclothed in their flesh, their sufferings increased and their condition fixed for all eternity. "This is the second death." Rev. xx. 12, 13, 14. "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." Rev. ii. 11.

[3] Virgil was not a Christian.

knew not, in order that I may escape these present ills and worse, that you guide me to the place of which you have just spoken so that I may look upon the gate of St. Peter[4] and upon those in misery of whom you have told!"

CANTO II

The same wood as in Canto I. Dante's courage for undertaking the journey begins to ooze away, but Virgil braces him up by telling him how Beatrice, incited by St. Lucy, Dante's patron saint, herself having been moved to action on his behalf by the Blessed Virgin, came to him, Virgil, and besought him to go to the assistance of his brother poet. On being assured of all this heavenly interest, Dante declares himself ready, and the two set out. The canto opens with one of those beautiful figures based on nature, and true to her in that absolute manner which alone characterizes the greatest art. Homely, lovely, above all, direct and simple, every figure used by Dante is drawn from those things which all men, in all generations, and all lands, care for and know.

The day was dying and twilight was bringing rest to the living creatures of the Earth after their labors, and I, solitary, was preparing for the hard-

[4] The Gate of Purgatory.

ships of a journey the sufferings of which my memory that errs not shall recount.

Then follows an appeal for help to the Muses, and to Virgil, and lastly a declaration about his own memory whose stores, gathered during the journey, he is about to draw upon in writing *The Comedy*. But at this point the natural man, overcome with fear at what he is about to undertake, again shows himself.

DANTE

"My poet-guide, consider my strength before you trust me to the abyss. You say[1] that Æneas while still in the flesh went to the immortal world, and was there in the body. Through his journey which you celebrate, he learned things that brought him victory, and prepared the way for papal authority.[2] Later, St. Paul went to bring back support for that faith which is the beginning of the way of salvation. But I, why should I go? and by whose authority? I am not Æneas, I am not Paul; neither I, nor others, believe me worthy; wherefore if I consent to go I fear it may be mad."

VIRGIL

"If I have rightly understood your words, your

[1] *Æneid*, Book VI.

[2] The success of Æneas, his victory in Italy, made the founding of the Empire possible, and Rome a place for the Papacy.

very soul is afraid, which condition often hinders a man so that it turns him back from honorable undertakings, as a mistake of sight does a shying beast. In order that you may rid yourself of this fear I will tell you why I came, and what I heard at the instant that I began to grieve for you. I was among those who are in the intermediate state,[3] when a blessed and beautiful lady[4] called me in suchwise that I besought her to command. Her eyes were brighter than the stars, and she began to say to me in low, sweet tones, an angel's voice: 'O courteous Mantuan spirit! whose fame yet lasts on Earth, and shall to the end of time! a friend of mine, but not of fortune, is so hindered on the steep hillside that he has turned back through fright, and, from what I have heard, I fear may already be so far lost as to make help vain. Go now, and with your splendid words, and with whatever is needful for his deliverance, aid him so that I may be comforted. I am Beatrice, who bids you go. I come from a place whither I long to return. Love moved me, and makes me speak. When I shall again be in the presence of my Lord I will often praise you to Him.'

"Then she was silent and I began: 'O lady of Virtue, your command, were it already in execution, would be too slowly obeyed. You need explain your

[3] Limbo, the place of spirits neither saved nor damned.
[4] Beatrice.

will no further to me, but tell me pray, why you are not afraid to descend into this place from that spacious realm whither you are so intent to return.'

" 'Because you are so eager to know I will tell you briefly,' she replied, 'why I do not fear to come down here. I am constituted by God, thanks be, such that your sufferings move me not. A gentle Lady[5] in Paradise feels pity for the straying one to whom I send you, so that she breaks Heaven's stern rule. It was she who called St. Lucy, saying, "Your faithful one has need of you, and I commend him to you!" Thereon St. Lucy came to the place where I was, and said: "Beatrice, true praise of God, why do you not go to the succor of him who so loved you that for your sake he came forth from the common crowd?[6] Do you not hear the anguish of his cry? Do you not see how death threatens him on life's rushing torrent which is no less terrible than the sea?" ' "

Virgil, continuing his story, says that Beatrice acted instantly on hearing the words of St. Lucy, and descended to Limbo where she found him. At her request, he, Virgil, set out, and discovered Dante on the desert hillside.

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[5] The Virgin.

[6] In order to write worthily of Beatrice he gave his life to study, which is an occupation that always withdraws a man from the majority of his fellow men—the throng.

VIRGIL

"And I came to you as she wished, and took you away from the savage beast. What is it then? Why, why do you draw back? Why harbor such cowardice in your heart? How can you lack daring and assurance, when three such blessed Ladies care for you in the court of Heaven, and my words pledge you so much good?"

DANTE

"Now go, for truly we are of one mind, you guide, you lord, you master."

The first and second cantos form an introduction to all that follows, by relating the cause of Dante's journey to the other world, and by telling how it came about that Virgil was his guide. These two cantos, or scenes, bring guide and traveler to the Gate of Hell, the passing of which occurs in the third canto, where the first true note of awfulness is sounded, and the twilight of the underworld begins to deepen on them, and the reader, and they, take passage with Charon, and cross the River Acheron, and are landed on the bourn from which no traveler returns. From then on to the end, the way lies downward through the ever narrowing circles of the abyss, and among the spirits of greater and greater sinners until, in the very pit

of Hell, they find the greatest of all sinners, Judas Iscariot. Scene upon scene, it is one vast picture, one gigantic act, in which the sense of horror, and unavailing regret, expressed in the words of the damned, are drawn in colors of ever increasing darkness. At any given point in the going-down one has the impression that no sufferings more terrible, or words more hopeless, or acts more blasphemous, or gloom more impenetrable can be. At the next descent, in the next moment, worse and blacker are realized. It is great art, this,—the power to command the gradation of one's medium, in Dante's case words, in such delicate manner as to produce an effect of steadily increasing fear and gloom, unfalteringly sustained throughout thirty-four successive scenes. Such art implies fineness of touch, strength and precision of technique, to have been at the instant and continuous beck of the poet. It reflects that inner or spiritual vigor, and exquisiteness, which are the sine qua non of genius. The same is just as true of the really great musician, sculptor, painter; of Beethoven, Phidias, Raphael. With these, as with Dante, the power to see fine distinctions, and express them, which is art, by means of gradation of medium, is the sign perfect. In everyday language, great artists do not use all their powder at the first shot, to do which, in the literal battle of life, is no less a proof of inferiority than in the spiritual. In this latter battle, the great art of the

world is the one incalculably precious sign of victory.

CANTO III

The Gate of Hell leading to a sort of antechamber, really the vestibule of Hell proper, which is on the far side of the River Acheron. The scene of this canto is laid on the near bank of Acheron and just within the gate.

It is the place assigned to the souls of the indifferent, those who on Earth had been neither good nor bad; those really who through all generations form the congregation of Laodicea. Revelation, iii:16. "So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." It is just what Heaven and Hell, alike, had done to these souls. Passing among them the poets come to the bank of Acheron. Here an earthquake and lightning terrify Dante and he swoons.

Above the gate the inscription:

Through me is the way into the woeful city; through me is the way to everlasting misery: through me is the way that leads among the damned. Justice moved my high creator; divine Power, supreme Wisdom, fundamental Love made me.[1] Be-

[1] Power, Wisdom and Love are here used to represent the three persons of the Trinity: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, respectively.

fore me were no created things, save eternal, and I eternal last.[2] Who enters must abandon every hope.

DANTE

"Master, the meaning of the words appals me."

VIRGIL

"This is no place for fear. All cowardice should here be dead."

Thereupon Virgil takes him by the hand, gives him a reassuring look, and leads him through the gate where, within, on all sides,

laments, sighs and loud wails resound through the starless air, and where are heard unknown tongues, horrible utterances, words of agony, accents of wrath.

DANTE

"What is it that I hear? and who are the people that appear to be so crushed by their wretchedness?"

VIRGIL

"The miserable souls of those who lived without

[2] Hell was created at the time the angels rebelled against God. At that time the only existent things were imperishable and everlasting, such as angels and the rest of the hierarchy of Heaven.

infamy and without praise. They are mingled with those despicable angels who neither rebelled against God nor were on His side, but were for themselves. The Heavens drove them out lest their brightness should be dimmed by such a presence, and the abyss of Hell refused them lest the damned should have some joy in extolling themselves by comparison."

DANTE

"Master, what is so grievous to them? What makes them lament so bitterly?"

VIRGIL

"I will tell you in few words. They have no hope of death,[3] and their blind existence is so degraded that they envy every other lot. Memory of them is not on Earth; pity disdains them, and justice too. Let us not speak of them, but look and go on."

These wretches who never were alive, were naked, and much stung by gad-flies and by wasps; their faces were streaked with blood, which, mingling with tears, was gathered at their feet by sickening worms.

Dante and Virgil now draw near to the banks of

[3] The second death, when if annihilation could come to them it would be a blessing.

Acheron and see Charon, keeper of the ferry of Hell, coming toward the shore in his boat.

CHARON

"Woe to you, wicked souls! hope never more to see the day! I come to take you to the other shore, into everlasting night, into heat, and cold. But you who are a living soul depart from these that are dead."

VIRGIL

"Be not vexed, Charon; it is so willed there where is power to carry out what is willed."

A marvelous account follows of how all the souls on the bank, blaspheming and weeping, embark, Charon beating with his oar whoever lags. And then, in contrast to this picture of horror and haste, a beautiful figurative passage of intense calm, and solemn meaning, one of the many lovely passages which, sprinkled throughout the Hell, intensify the awfulness of its real character,—at times almost beyond endurance.

As leaves in autumn drop one after another until the bough is bare, so the sinful seed of Adam when summoned, cast themselves, one by one, from the shore. Thus they cross the dark waves, and ere

they are landed on the far bank a new crowd has assembled on the near.

VIRGIL

"My son, those who die in the wrath of God are all assembled here from every land. They are eager to cross the stream for divine justice so pricks them that fear is turned into desire. A good soul never passes this way: and so, if Charon frets, you can easily comprehend the meaning of his words."

Now comes the earthquake, the wind and a flash of crimson light, and Dante falls senseless like one on whom sleep lays hold.

CANTO IV

The far side of Acheron. The first circle of Hell, Limbo, the dwelling place of the souls of unbaptized infants, and upright heathen, those who through no fault of their own did not know God, in the technical sense of being initiated into Christianity through baptism and faith in Christ. Dante and Virgil pass through the outer walls of a castle and discover the noble-minded of ancient times gathered on the green within.

They are met by Homer and the other poets. Virgil points out the philosophers, among them

Plato and Aristotle; also famous historical personages, other than philosophers and poets. The punishment of this circle is wholly negative. The lines have fallen to these shades in pleasant places, and their suffering is confined to an eternal desire, without hope, to see God.

VIRGIL

"Now I would have you know, before you go on, that these were people who lived without sin; and though they have merits, it is not enough because they did not have baptism; and since they lived before Christianity, they did not properly worship God; and of such am I myself. For such failing, and not for other fault are we lost, and so far hurt, that in desire we continue without hope."

Great sorrow came into my heart when I heard him, because I realized that people of high worth must be here.

DANTE

"Tell me, my master, tell me, Lord, did ever any one who later reached Paradise go forth from here, either through his own merit, or that of another?"

VIRGIL

"I was new here[1] when I saw a Mighty One

[1] Virgil died 19 B. C., so he had been but short while in Limbo when Christ descended into Hell.

come hither crowned with sign of victory. He drew forth the shade of our first parent, of Abel his son, and that of Noah, of Moses the law-giver, Abraham the patriarch, and David the King, Israel with his father and his descendants, and with Rachel for whose sake he served so long, and many others; and these he carried to Paradise. And I would have you understand that before this the souls of men were not saved."

They now come to the walls of a castle and enter it. While still a little distant Dante recognizes the fact that here are spirits whose condition is superior to that of the rank and file in Limbo.

DANTE

"O thou in whom learning and art are honored, who are these who have such glory, that it exalts them above the others?"

VIRGIL

"Their glorious reputation, which is still rehearsed among the living, gains grace in Heaven which so uplifts them."

At this I heard a voice:

"Honor to the loftiest poet! his shade returns which had departed!"

When the voice ceased, I saw four mighty spirits coming toward us; their faces neither sad nor glad.

VIRGIL

"Behold him who comes, sword in hand, before the other three, even as lord; he is Homer, the supreme poet; the next is Horace; Ovid is the third, and the last is Lucan. Because each of them enjoys, as I do, the name poet, which the single voice proclaimed, they do me honor, and in that do well."

Thus I saw gathered together the beautiful school of that consummate lord of song who wings his flight above the others like an eagle. After some talk among themselves they turned and saluted me; at this my master smiled. And much more honor yet they showed me, for they made me one of their company, so that I became the sixth amid so much knowledge. Thereupon we moved forward, speaking of things about which it is here right to keep silence, even as there it was proper to speak.

In company with these five poets Dante sees many spirits:—

whose eyes were slow, and grave, and who were of high authority in appearance; who spoke little and with low voices. We drew to one side so that all could be seen. There before me on the green

were pointed out the great spirits to have seen whom rejoices my soul.

I saw Electra[2] with many companions, among whom I recognized Hector and Æneas, and Cæsar in mail, with his piercing eyes. I saw Camilla and Penthesilea, and on the other side I beheld King Latinus who was sitting with Lavinia his daughter. I saw that Brutus who drove out Tarquin; Lucretia, Julia, Marcia and Cornelia; and Saladin, apart and alone. When I lifted my eyes a little more I beheld Aristotle, master of the wise, seated amid the philosophic family; all eyes were on him; all did him reverence. Here I saw Socrates and Plato, who, before others, stand nearest to him. I can not record the entire list, because my long theme so presses that words must often be cut short while there is yet much to tell.

The works of Raphael in the Vatican, his *School of Athens, Parnassus* and *Dispute of the Sacrament,* are the only things in art, of the same sort,

[2] Electra, not the Greek heroine, but the mother of Dardanus, who was the founder of Troy. All of the persons mentioned before Saladin were in some conspicuous way connected with Troy and Rome. Saladin is introduced as an example of noble character drawn from a race wholly apart from Trojan or Latin origins. Then follow the learned in all branches of human knowledge, led, of course, by the philosophers, first Aristotle, and ending with the name of the famous Arabian Averrhoes, who made "the great comment" on Aristotle, the Latin translation of which (1250) brought the works of the philosopher to the notice of the Western world, i. e., to Europe.

and comparable to Dante's vision of the noblest exponents of Philosophy and Science, as set out in this fourth canto of Hell. And if, as it has often been argued, Dante displayed the essence of pride when he described himself as being made "the sixth in so great a company," does not Raphael do the same thing in his pictures, and put himself among such persons? And in both instances, time, which is the prover of art, has set its approbation upon these acts, and declared their authors, Dante and Raphael, to belong in those annals of fame where, in the short life, they put themselves. Raphael groups Homer with others, but none the less sets him alone, just as Dante does. And again when Raphael places Dante among the divines of the Disputa it is but the adequate recognition of superlative greatness, in a manner that does not fail of being itself superlatively great. The only real hall of fame is such as Dante created, and peopled, in his fourth canto; such as Raphael created, and peopled, in his Vatican pictures.

CANTO V

With this canto the real, what might almost be called the physical, sufferings of Hell begin. The scene is laid in the second circle, that just below Limbo,

a place where there is no light, that roars like the

sea in a gale; where the infernal hurricane, which never ceases, drives on the spirits with its blast hither and thither, down and up; where they are swept forward and no hope ever soothes them, either of repose, or of less suffering.

At the entrance stands Minos, a horrible creature borrowed from classical mythology, who acts as judge of the damned and decides on the circle to which each is to descend.

In this dark atmosphere of everlasting restlessness, symbolizing the tempest of carnal passion, souls suffer for the unchastity of their lives on Earth. Virgil points out Achilles, Dido, Cleopatra, and Semiramis—

who by law made lust legal.

After I had heard my teacher name the lords and ladies of old time, pity overwhelmed me and I was well-nigh bewildered.

DANTE

"Poet, gladly would I talk with those two who are together, and appear so light upon the hurricane."

VIRGIL

"Watch when they are near and then, by the love which binds them, ask them and they will come."

Soon as the wind swept them toward us, I cried out:

"O weary souls, come and talk with us, if Another[1] forbid it not."

ONE OF THESE TWO—FRANCESCA

"O living man, gentle and kind, who goes through the darkness visiting us who stained the world blood-red,[2] if the King of the universe were friendly we would pray Him to grant you peace, because you have pity on our misery. Of what you wish to hear and say we will hear and speak to you while the hurricane, as at present, is lulled. The city in which I was born is on the sea-shore where the Po, with his tributaries, flows down to peace. Love which quickly lays hold on gentle hearts, laid hold on this one because of the fair form that in death was taken from me, and the way even yet hurts me. Love which absolves no lover from loving, moved me so mightily with the wish to please him that, as you see, the wish does even yet continue. Love brought us to the same death. Cain[3] awaits him who took our life."

Dante bows his head in silence.

[1] God.
[2] Meaning that adultery often leads to murder.
[3] The circle called Caina, deep down in Hell, where fratricides are punished.

VIRGIL

"What are you thinking about?"

DANTE

"Of how many sweet thoughts, of what great rapture, led this pair to these pitiable straights.

"Francesca, your misery makes me weep. But tell me, in the season of sweet sighs, by what stages and how, did your love to passion turn?"

FRANCESCA

"'A sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things,'[4] and this your teacher[5] knows. But if you wish to learn of the beginnings of our passion I will do like one who weeps and tells.

"One day for pastime we were reading of Lancelot, and how love conquered him. We were alone and unfearful of discovery. Many times the story brought our eyes together, and paled our cheeks, but only a single point overcame us wholly. When we read of the longed-for smile being kissed by such a lover, this one, who never more shall be separated from me, kissed my trembling lips. Galahaut was the book. That day we read no more."

[4] Tennyson's line in *In Memoriam* is a perfect translation of the meaning of Francesca's words.
[5] Virgil.

In every generation, and wherever men have cared deeply for the "breath and finer spirit of all knowledge" cast into the form of poetry, or for intense and controlled reciting, in words of incandescent meaning, the things of good and evil that befall our human lot, then and there the Francesca story, as told by Dante, has been regarded as perfect art. Some feel its indescribable beauty as Leigh Hunt, who said that the episode of Francesca is "like a lily in the mouth of Tartarus"; others, like Carlyle, receive through it a present and enduring counsel from the abyss of all understanding; "Infinite pity yet also infinite rigor of law; it is so Nature is made: it is so Dante discerned she was made." Again, in *Heroes and Hero Worship,* but more in the strain of Leigh Hunt, Carlyle calls the Francesca story "a thing woven as out of rainbows on a ground of eternal black."

CANTO VI

In the third circle those are punished who in life were gluttons.

CANTO VII

The fourth circle, where the souls of misers, those who hoarded their possessions, and of spendthrifts, those who squandered theirs, are punished.

CANTO VIII

The Stygian marsh where are the souls of those whom anger overcame, in the sense of leading them to acts of wrath and open violence. On the far side of the marsh rises the encircling wall of Dis, the innermost dwelling place of Hell where the worst sinners are gathered. Dante and Virgil are ferried across the marsh and at one point a shade, choked with mire, cries out:

"Who are you that comes before your time?"

DANTE

"If I come I do not remain; but who are you, filthy creature?"

SHADE

"You see that I am one of those who weep."

DANTE

"With weeping and with grief continue, cursed spirit, for in spite of all your filth I recognize you."

Then he reached out with both hands toward our boat whereat my cautious leader thrust him back, saying, "Get you gone along with the other dogs." After this Virgil threw his arms about my neck and kissed me, and said: "Blessed be she that bore you! Among the living he was an arrogant mortal. No

act of kindness sweetens his memory. That is why his spirit is here consumed with fury. How many, this moment, up there among the living are reputed great rulers who are destined down here to wallow like swine in mire, leaving behind them memories of fearful blame."

DANTE

"Master, I would gladly see him doused before we leave the marsh."

VIRGIL

"Before we see the other shore you shall have your wish. It is right that you enjoy fulfilment of such desire."

A little later I saw such rending of him by the muddy ones that I still praise God for it, and thank Him. All shrieked, "At Filippo Argenti!"[1] and the furious Florentine shade, enraged, bit himself with his own teeth.

CANTO IX

The end of Canto VIII, and the greater part of Canto IX, is taken up with an account of the difficulties which Virgil and Dante encountered while

[1] He was one of Dante's most bitter opponents in Florence, a man long forgotten save for Dante, who has made his name the synonym for a hot-tempered, hard, rich man, which he was known for in his own day.

trying to get entrance at the gate of Dis, the walls of which are guarded by Furies. Finally, a messenger is sent from Heaven and the gate opened. Once inside, Dante looks around him and discovers a great plain full of woe and cruel torments.

As at Arles[1] where the Rhone spreads out its mouths, as at Pola, near the Quarnaro[2] which hems in Italy and bathes her borders, the whole place is uneven with tombs, so was it here, except that the manner was harsher, for flames were sprinkled among these sepulchres by which they were so tremendously heated that no handicraft requires iron to be hotter. Every one had its lid up, and fearful wails were issuing; such wails as did indeed seem the shrieks of great and fearful sufferers.

DANTE

"Master, who are they that lying within these coffers make themselves known by their terrible cries?"

VIRGIL

"Here are the archheretics with their adherents of every sect, and the tombs are much fuller than you suspect."

[1] Town near the mouth of the Rhone.
[2] The Gulf of Quarnaro.

CANTO X

Among the fiery tombs, the same as in Canto IX. In this place are punished those heretics who maintained that the soul dies with the body.

DANTE

"O Supreme Virtue that leads me as you will through the hateful circles of the damned, speak to me and satisfy my longings. The people that are lying in these tombs, might I see them? All the lids are up and no one is on guard."

VIRGIL

"Every one of them will be locked in when they shall come back from Jehoshaphat[1] with the bodies which they have left on Earth."

SHADE, ADDRESSING DANTE FROM ONE OF THE TOMBS

"O Tuscan, picking your way through this city of fire, may it please you to tarry for a moment. Your manner of speaking makes it plain that you are a native of that noble fatherland toward which I was perhaps too vindictive."

[1] The valley of Jehoshaphat was believed to be the place where the Last Judgment was to occur and therefore the place where the dead would resume their physical bodies.

Fearful, Dante draws close up to Virgil.

VIRGIL

"What are you doing? Turn! Look there, behold Farinata[2] who has risen erect. From the waist up you will see him."

I had already fixed my gaze square on his face, and he was straightening himself up, chest and front, as if he held Hell in scorn. My leader, with sure and daring hands, pushed me among the tombs saying:

"Make your words plain."

When I reached the foot of his sepulchre he looked at me a moment, and then, contemptuously:

"Who were your ancestors?"

I, who was anxious to obey, concealed nothing, but told him all; at this he raised his brows a trifle; then said:

"They were fiercely hostile to me and to my forbears, and to my party, so that twice I dispersed them."

"If they were scattered they gathered again from every side on both occasions, the art of doing which yours have not mastered," I replied to him.

At this moment there rose alongside Farinata a shade, visible from his chin up. I think it had risen

[2] Farinata was banished from Florence, and later he was largely instrumental in bringing about the defeat of the Florentines at the battle of Montaperti, September, A. D. 1260.

on its knees. It looked around as if wishing to learn whether there were some one with me. But when it saw that I was alone, weeping it said:

"If on account of your lofty genius you are permitted to go through this dark prison, where is my son,[3] and why is he not with you?"

DANTE

"I come not of myself. He who waits yonder is leading me. Mayhap your Guido held him in disdain."[4]

Suddenly, straightening up, the shade exclaims:

"Did you say: 'He *held?*' Is he then no longer among the living?"

Perceiving on my part some delay in answering, he swooned and was no longer visible.

But that haughty soul at whose request I had tarried, did not change a feature, or turn his neck, or move his body.

FARINATA

"And if (going on from where he had been interrupted) they have not mastered the art of returning that gives me greater anguish than this bed."

[3] The shade here speaking to Dante was that of one Cavalcanti, father of the dearest friend of Dante's youth, a poet like himself.

[4] Guido Cavalcanti urged Dante to write in the vulgar tongue, i. e., in Italian rather than Latin. This might be interpreted as an act of disrespect to Virgil, who wrote in Latin.

After more conversation in which Dante learns that he has misunderstood the shade's question about his son, he tries to make amends for not having replied at once that he was alive.

"Tell him," I said, "that I did not answer because I did not understand. Tell him that his son is still among the living."

No canto in the trilogy is finer in respect to character drawing. Few and disdainful as are the words of the superb Farinata, impatient of Cavalcanti's interruption as one might be of a child's, they give a perfect idea of the man himself. Few and pathetic as are the words in which Cavalcanti displays fatherly pride in his son, and fatherly grief, they compel the reader to know what sort of man he was. Few as are Dante's words, and full of thoughtful sympathy for the pain he has unwittingly given Cavalcanti, or terse and proud as are his answers to Farinata's haughty remarks, Dante depicts himself beyond chance of misunderstanding, as the high-spirited, sometimes stiff-necked, but kindest-hearted of gentlemen. Pride of family, contempt of surroundings, the flash of regret, and parental tenderness are made to live in their very essence, in the characters of these two shades—Farinata and Cavalcanti—to whom Dante, as to many of the souls of the dead, has given

immortality, not to mention the immortality which, through bestowing so freely upon others, he bestowed so indubitably upon himself.

CANTO XI

Walking among the red-hot tombs Dante and Virgil at last reach the inner edge of the circle and find themselves close to the wall where it falls away to the pit below.

Here, because of the horrible stench which the abyss threw out, we drew to one side behind the lid of a great tomb.

While waiting to become accustomed to the stench, Virgil discourses to Dante about the divisions of Hell lower down, and about the sins punished in each.

VIRGIL

"Injury is the intended end of every sin which is hated in Heaven, and every such intention brings trouble to others, either through violence, or through fraud. But since fraud is peculiar to man alone, it all the more angers God, and for this reason the fraudulent are lower down, and their lot is worse."

In the parts of Hell which are above Dis, only

sins of incontinence are punished, such as lust and greed. Thus the three great divisions of Hell are apportioned in descending order, to those who have sinned through incontinence, through violence, through fraud. We have now come to the violent, and Virgil explains how violence may be done to three persons, and hence is of three sorts, and how to each of these, a subdivision or round of the seventh circle of Hell is devoted.

VIRGIL

"To God, to one's self, to one's neighbor, may violence be done."

He then goes on to show the twofold form which violence may assume in each of these cases. Toward God by blasphemy, or by violating the laws of nature; toward one's self by suicide, or by wasting one's own possessions; toward one's neighbor, by murder, or stealing his goods. Of fraud he distinguishes two kinds: that which may be practised on a friend, one who has faith in you, and that which may be practised on those who have no reason to place confidence in you. In the latter case the common bond of love which binds, or should bind, all men, is broken. In the former, that bond which binds friends, or makes for love of native land, is broken.

CANTO XII

Seventh circle divided into three concentric rings.

Virgil and Dante have descended from the edge of Upper Hell into the first circle of Lower Hell, the seventh, in order, from the top down; from the places of Incontinence, to the places of Violence and Malice. This descent was—

alpine, and because of the creature that was lying there such as every eye would shun. As is the landslide which on this side of Trent, struck the Adige on its flank, either as the result of earthquake, or because the rocks gave way, for from the mountain's summit where it started, to the plain, the cliffs have been so broken in their fall that it is barely possible to clamber down, such was the descent into this pit. On the rim of the chasm, stretched out, lay the infamy of Crete[1] that was conceived in the false cow. And when he saw us he began to bite himself as if consumed by inward anger.

VIRGIL

"Perhaps you take this one with me to be the Duke of Athens;[2] he who in the world killed you?

[1] The Minotaur, symbol of violence and fury, half bull, half man. "The infamy of Crete" because of his infamous origin. VI, *Æneid.*

[2] Theseus, called Duke of Athens, who, with the help of Ariadne's thread, found his way out of the Cretan labyrinth after he had slain the Minotaur.

Be gone, beast! He does not come instructed by your sister, but he goes to behold your punishments."

Like the bull which breaks his halter at the instant he receives his death blow and, unable to advance, plunges right and left, such I beheld the Minotaur.

VIRGIL

"Run! while he rages we must make the most of our chance."

So we picked our way down over the fallen stones that often moved beneath my feet which, in that place, were an unusual burden. Deep in thought, I made the descent.

VIRGIL

"You are perhaps thinking about this ruinous landslide which is guarded by the angry beast that I just now silenced. Know then, that on the other occasion when I descended into this Lower Hell the cliff had not yet fallen. But indeed, if I am not mistaken, a little before He came who levied the great toll on Hell[3] the deep and filthy vale shook[4] in all directions so that I thought the universe was moved by love; and at that moment, this old precipice here, and elsewhere, fell down. But look

[3] The souls of upright heathen, and the great of the Old Testament, whom Christ took out of Hell.

[4] The earthquake described by St. Matthew, xxvii, 51, as having taken place at the time of the Crucifixion.

This story, in all its circumstantial details, as related by

steadfastly below. The river of blood is near. In it boils every one who by violence injures others."

Oh! blind greed, both criminal and crazy, which goads us so viciously in the short life, and then in the eternal overwhelms us so terribly!

Dante now sees the river of boiling blood, and Centaurs, armed with bows and arrows, coursing along its banks.

Round and round the river's margin they go shooting any soul that lifts itself out of the blood more than for its crime is permitted.

They come, finally, close up to the Centaurs. The

Virgil, is one of the characteristic ways by which Dante again and again gives a sense of overwhelming reality to his writing. It is the sort of touch which convinces the reader by making him, as it were, feel perfectly at home. It is the most natural and common thing in the world for one who is acting as guide in a place long familiar to himself, but new to another, to say, "It was thus and so when I first came here." And this is precisely what Virgil does. These lines, like so many in *The Comedy*, are glorious illustrations of what George Meredith says about the art of writing; words which he puts into the mouth of *Diana of the Crossways*. "The art of the pen (we write on darkness) is to rouse the inward vision, instead of laboring with a drop-scene brush, as if it were to the eye; because our flying minds can not contain a protracted description. That is why the poets who spring imagination with a word or a phrase paint lasting pictures. The Shakesperian, the Dantesque, are in a line, two at most." This is true over and over, twice in this very canto, of the way in which Dante never lets the reader—the reader is both listener and onlooker, as at a play—forget that he, Dante, is flesh and blood, and the others, shades. "He moves what he touches," cries Chiron. "The stones often moved under my feet," says Dante.

great Chiron, who raised Achilles, takes an arrow, and with the notched end pushes aside his beard.[5] His mouth uncovered, he says to his companions:

"Do you see how the one behind moves what he touches? That is not the way with the feet of the dead."

VIRGIL

"He is indeed alive, and thus, all solitary, it is my duty to guide him through the dark abyss. Necessity takes him; not pleasure. He is no thief, nor am I a fraudulent soul. By that divine Power which directs my steps along so wild a road, I pray you assign us one of your companions, to whom we may keep close; one who will show us the ford, and will carry this one over on his back. He is no shade that can go through the air."

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[5] In a remarkable passage on realism in art, Ruskin makes wonderful use of Chiron from this scene. He is arguing for the doctrine that all great art represents something that it sees or believes in: nothing unseen or uncredited. *Modern Painters,* III.

"And just because it is always something that it sees or believes there is the peculiar character above noted, almost unmistakable, in all high and true ideals of having been as it were studied from life, and involving pieces of sudden familiarity, and close specific painting which never would have been admitted or even thought of, had not the painter drawn either from the bodily life or from the life of faith. For instance, Dante's Centaur, Chiron, dividing his beard with his arrow before he can speak, is a thing that no mortal would ever have thought of, if he had not actually seen the Centaur do it. They might have composed handsome bodies of men and horses in all possible ways through a whole life of pseudo-

Chiron immediately appoints one of his companion Centaurs to be their guide and they start out along the edge of the blood-red boiling, in which the scalded were shrieking.

I saw some who were in up to their brows.

THE CENTAUR

"These were tyrants who verily dealt in blood and plunder."

As they proceed the depth of the boiling blood lessens:

until it cooked only the feet, and here was the ford.

CANTO XIII

The seventh circle, second ring. The place in which all those who have done violence to themselves are punished.

CANTOS XIV, XV, XVI, XVII

The scene in these four cantos is laid in the seventh circle. The sin punished throughout this circle is that of doing or showing violence against

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idealism, and yet never dreamed of any such thing. But the real living Centaur actually trotted across Dante's brain, and he saw him do it."

God. It is of three kinds; violence to God, blasphemy; violence to nature, sodomy; violence to possessions, usury.

CANTO XIV

To make the new conditions perfectly understandable I say that we had now come to a desert where no plant could grow. The gloomy wood encircles it, and it in turn is circled by the river of blood. At the very edge we stopped. How greatly must the wrath of God be feared by all who read of what was here made manifest to my eyes.

I saw many a company of naked shades, every one weeping pitifully. Different chastisements appeared to be laid on them. Some were flat upon the sand; some sat all hunched over; others hurried to and fro without pause. The greater number were the restless ones; the lesser, those who were lying down under their punishment, but the shrieks of the latter were sharper.

Over all the sand, falling quietly, there rained down great flakes of fire like snow on mountains when there is no wind. The dance of the wretched hands never stopped, now from one spot now from another, flicking off new fallen flames.

Dante notices a shade[1] that does not seem to heed

the fiery rain, and he inquires about him of Virgil. The shade answers for himself.

"What I[1] was alive that am I dead. Though Jove wear out the smith from whom in mighty anger he took the heavy thunderbolt with which he dealt me the final blow; though he wear out the others, one by one, at the black forge in Mongibello[2] crying 'help, Vulcan, help!' as he did in the Phlegra fight, and hurl down upon me with all his strength, he shall not humble me."

VIRGIL

"O Capaneus, because your proud spirit is not subdued your punishments are the heavier. No torment save your own rage can furnish pain meet for such savage anger."

Then with gentler look turning to me, he said:

"He was one of the seven Kings who laid seige to Thebes. He held God in disdain, and seems to, still. But as I said to him just now his own pride is a very proper decoration for his proud breast. Now follow me and take care not to set foot on the parched sand."

Without more words we came to the place where

[1] This is Capaneus, who defied Jove, and for doing so was slain with a thunderbolt.

[2] The medieval and modern name of Mt. Etna.

a little brook gushes out from the wood. The thought of its red color[3] even yet makes me shudder.

CANTO XV

Third ring of the seventh circle. Sodomites on whom, as of old, "The Lord rained brimstone and fire."

We were by this time so far from the wood that it was lost to sight. We were met by a company of shades moving close to the bank.

Dante and Virgil are walking on the edge of a terrace as it were, and the shades just below them on the next step.

Each was peering at us as men do at one another in the faint light of a young moon. They con-

[3] A characteristic touch of Dante's power of vivid realism is displayed in his reference to the bloody redness of the brook, memory of which "even yet makes me shudder." It is a method that works, as employed by Dante, with unfailing success. See Inferno, Canto XXXII, where in the frozen regions he saw "a thousand faces made brutish by the cold," and says, "for this reason I shudder, and shall always, at the sight of frozen pools." It is realism even greater than that of the passage in Canto XII, describing Chiron parting his beard; the supreme sort of realism to which transcendent art alone attains; the sort that for the time being recreates the reader, and makes him absolutely of one mind and heart with the writer; in other words, of understanding and emotion identical with that of the author.

tracted their brows toward us as an old tailor his upon the needle's eye.

Thus scanned I was recognized by one who seized hold of the hem of my garment, exclaiming:

SHADE

"What a miracle!"

When he stretched out his arm to me, I fixed my eyes on his burnt visage so that even his scorched features did not prevent recognition. Bending my own face down to the level of his, I said:

"Are you here, Ser Brunetto?"

BRUNETTO LATINI[1]

"O my son, let it not annoy you if Brunetto Latini turns back a little with you, while the troop goes on."

[1] This is Brunetto Latini. He was one of the most learned and able Florentines of the thirteenth century, and a man for whom Dante had profound admiration; admiration which amounted to true and lasting affection. While Dante laments the fact that Brunetto is no longer among the living, and openly declares that no small part of his own fame, as a poet, is due to Brunetto's teaching and example, and that Brunetto's image is fixed in his mind and heart, he none the less places him in Hell. It is a notable instance of Dante's sense of justice, and regard for what he believed to be right. No matter how dear personally, or how great intellectually, Brunetto Latini was, or appeared to be to Dante, the poet does not hesitate when it comes to assigning him his due place in the moral scheme of the universe, for in doing so Dante feels himself to be representing the justice of Almighty God which must punish vice though it were the act of a man of the most com-

DANTE

"With all my soul I beseech you do so, or if you wish me to sit down with you I will do that, provided it pleases him with whom I am going."

BRUNETTO LATINI

"Ah! my son, whoever of this troop halts for a moment must thereafter lie a hundred years without moving his hands to brush away the falling flames when they strike him; therefore continue to go forward. I will follow at your skirts, and later I will rejoin my companions who go wailing their everlasting punishment."

I dared not go down to his level but I kept my head bowed like one who is reverent.

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manding intellect, and lofty powers, not to mention the fact of his being the friend of any particular person. Greater fairness, and more profound respect for natural law is not set forth in any of the stories of men, than in this pathetic account of the meeting of Brunetto and Dante. It is the compound of a seven-times refined mortal friendship with respect for divine justice. It ennobles mankind, and glorifies God, and proves that the former, at its best, is one with the latter. In the truest sense does this fifteenth canto of Hell give us the portrait of Dante, a portrait in the sense meant by Samuel Butler when he says: "A great portrait is always more a portrait of the painter than the painted. When we look at a portrait of Holbein or Rembrandt it is of Holbein or Rembrandt that we think more than of the subject of their picture. Even a portrait of Shakespeare by Holbein or Rembrandt could tell us very little about Shakespeare. It would, however, tell us a great deal about Holbein or Rembrandt."

In precisely this way does Dante give us his own portrait, tell us a great deal about Dante, when he is doing his best, and a wonderful best it is, to tell us about Brunetto Latini.

BRUNETTO LATINI

"What destiny brings you here before your end? And who is he that shows you the way?"

DANTE

"Above, in that life on which the sun shines, before my days had all been told, I lost my way in a dark wood. Only yesterday morning did I turn my back upon it. This one of whom you ask came to me at the moment when I was returning to that wood, and he is now leading me homeward along this path."

BRUNETTO LATIN

"And you fulfil the promise of your birth you can not fail to make the glorious port, at least if I discerned rightly while I was among the living. Had my death not been so untimely, seeing Heaven so well disposed toward you, I would have given you encouragement in your work."

DANTE

"Had I my wish, you would not yet be banished from human nature; for in my mind is fixed, and this moment fills my heart, the dear, good, fatherly image of you, as when in the world you taught me hour by hour how man wins immortality. It be-

hooves that while I live my tongue shall declare the depth of my gratitude to you."

CANTO XVI

In this canto the story of those who have done violence to nature is continued.

CANTO XVII

Still the third ring of the seventh circle. Those are here who have done violence to Art in the sense of causing money to beget money; abuse of possessions in the sense of usury. While Virgil makes arrangements for the descent into the eighth circle, Dante visits the shades of the usurers who are, like the other shades of the seventh circle, suffering under the fiery rain. The burning sand ends with this ring, the edge of which is walled with stone. This wall drops sheer, and very deep, to the eighth circle, the first of the two last, or bottommost circles of Hell, where the various sins resulting from fraud are punished. The canto opens with an account of the beast Geryon, Dante's symbol of fraud, and closes with a description of the descent to the eighth circle on Geryon's shoulders. Nowhere does Dante so absolutely join the real and the impossible, the strange and the usual, what never was and what is of every day, as in this canto. Furthermore, the long annals of art

offer few passages equal, and none superior, in respect to a poet's necessarily twofold power of reason and imagination. If Dante himself did not tell us at the beginning of Paradise that both peaks of Parnassus must yield him inspiration for accomplishing his last labor, it would be hard to believe he had not had recourse to both peaks when he wrote the seventeenth canto of his Hell. But he says that for all parts, short of the Paradise, the aid of one peak of the Muses' mountain was enough. The ineffable gentleness and sweetness essential to the Paradise have of course no place in Hell, but all qualities of reason and imagination, other than these, are requisite to describing Hell, and nowhere are they altogether, or more powerfully represented, than in the story of the descent to the regions of fraud.

The preceding canto closes as follows, with an account of Virgil's asking Dante for the cord which he wore bound around his waist.

I handed it to him gathered up and coiled. Taking it he turned to the right and threw it far out from the edge, down into the deep gulf.

VIRGIL

"What I wait for will soon come up."

A man should always, so far as possible, avoid telling what will sound false, because, though not

untruthful, he may have the appearance of lying. But in the present case I can not keep silence.

By the words of this Comedy I swear to you, Reader—may they not be doomed to brief popularity—that I saw swim up through the dense, dark air, a creature that would shake every steadfast heart. It rose as a man who has gone down to loosen an anchor caught on a rock, or other hidden thing in the sea, lifting itself by bounding, upward motions, and drawing its feet after.

The seventeenth canto now opens in continuation of the description of this creature.

VIRGIL

"Behold the savage beast with the pointed tail that can remove mountains, and break walls and weapons; behold him that cankers the whole world."

Thereupon Virgil signaled to him to come to the margin, whereat the loathsome image of fraud drew nearer and rested his head and body, but did not draw up his tail. His face was the face of a just man, so benevolent was its aspect. The rest of him was serpent. He had hairy arms, and talons in place of hands. His back, and his chest, and both his sides were patterned over with knots and rings. Tartars or Turks never wove fabrics with more colors of ground-work and pattern, nor did Arachne lay such webs upon the loom. In such wise rested

that evilest of beasts on the edge of the retaining wall. His whole tail quivered in the void, twisting upward its venomous fork, which, like a scorpion's, armed the tip.

VIRGIL

"Our course must now lie toward the place where that vicious beast is couching."

Therefore we turned down to the right, and took ten steps along the margin, in order to escape the hot sand and falling fire. And when we had come to him, I saw, a short way beyond, people seated on the sand close to the void.

VIRGIL

"In order that you may carry away complete experience of this ring, go now and examine their condition. Let your words be brief. While you are gone I will speak with the beast and induce it to lend us its strong shoulders."

Alone, I went to the place where the unhappy ones were sitting. Their misery was bursting out at their eyes. Now to one place, now to another, they moved their hands for relief, sometimes from the flames, sometimes from the hot sand. They acted like dogs in summer, now with muzzle, now with paws, when they are bitten by fleas, or flies, or gad-flies. I fixed my eyes on some in particular on whom the grievous fire was falling, but I could rec-

ognize none.[1] I saw that a money-bag hung about the neck of each. The bags were of certain colors and bore certain devices, and on these their eyes fed.

After Dante has made out who some of the shades were, by the coats of arms blazoned on their money-bags, and has had brief conversation with them, he returns to Virgil, whom he finds already mounted on Geryon's back.

VIRGIL

"Be strong, and of good courage. From now on the going down is by such stairs.[2] Get up in front, for I wish to be between, so that the tail can not sting you."

I seated myself on the huge shoulders. I tried to say "hold me tight," but my voice would not come as I expected. He who at other times, and in other dangers, had helped me, so soon as I was mounted, embraced and supported me with his arms.

VIRGIL

"On, Geryon! Let your circlings be wide and your descending slow. Remember your unusual burden."

[1] It is here with the usurers, as it was with the avaricious, Hell VII, moral blindness to the right use of wealth has destroyed their personality and made them all alike by taking away every vestige of individuality.

[2] No longer on foot, or by boat, but on the backs of the creatures of Hell.

As a little vessel slips from the beach, backward, backward, so he drew off. When he felt himself to be entirely free, he swung his tail round to the place where his chest had been, stretching it out like an eel, and paddled in mid-air with his claws. Greater fear I do not believe there was when Phaëton forsook the reins, than mine when I saw that I was in mid-air, and that everything was lost to sight save the beast. He swam onward, slowly, slowly, circling and descending, but I was unconscious of the motion except as I felt the wind on my face and from below.

The sound of falling water and of fearful wailing, together with the sight of fires, fills Dante with terror. At last:

Geryon set us at the bottom; close to the very foot of the precipice, and, rid of us, vanished as arrow from bow-string.

CANTOS XVIII TO XXX INCLUSIVE

The thirteen succeeding cantos, beginning with the eighteenth, together make up the eighth circle of Hell. This entire circle is given over to the punishment of the souls of men who practised fraud. But fraud Dante thought of as divided into two distinct varieties. He says in Hell, Canto XI, "fraud, man may practise on one who puts trust in

him, or on one that has no reason to put confidence in him." He goes on to say that the latter sort of fraud violates only the common bond of natural kindliness among men, but that the former violates the confidence which has been bred of intimate relations between man and man. The difference turns upon the distinction which all men feel between the man who succeeds in cheating a casual business acquaintance, and the man who cheats his friend because his friend believes in him so entirely that he does not feel any need to take precautions. The former variety of fraud is punished in the eighth circle; the latter in the ninth, i. e., lower down, because worse.

The entire eighth circle is called Malebolge, which means "Evil-pits"; hollows in which the evil spirits are prisoned and punished. This eighth circle, Malebolge, is a truncated cone-shaped depression. In other words, the land slopes inward and downward from the encircling base of the precipice at the foot of which Geryon has just landed Dante, to a lower circular opening, the throat really of the deepest part of Hell. This slope is cut up by ten concentric valleys or ravines, *bolge,* divided from one another by walls of rock. One of these circular ravines lies below another in descending order and the walls between them are connected by arched bridges of rock. Virgil leads Dante across the bridges from one wall to the next. Thus they de-

scend through Malebolge seeing and conversing with some of the shades in each of the ten pits.

CANTO XVIII

The first and second valleys of Malebolge. In the first valley are procurers and seducers: in the second, flatterers.

Along the dismal rock on this side and on that, I saw horned demons with great whips striking the shades cruelly from behind. Ah, how the first lash made them run! None waited for a second cut. From the old bridge we gazed at a troop which was approaching.

VIRGIL

"Look at that great one who is coming and sheds not a tear for all his pain. He is Jason who, through courage and through cunning, bore the golden fleece away from Colchis. He cruised round the island of Lemnos after the brave and heartless women had killed all the men. It was there that he, with his wooing and his skilful arguments, deceived the maiden Hypsipyle,[1] who, before, had herself deceived all the others. It was there he left her, big with child, and forsaken. Such sin brings him to such punishment. And for treating Medea in the

[1] Hypsipyle by a deceit managed to save her father in spite of her agreement to join in killing all the men.

same way is this vengeance wreaked on him. With him go all who practise to deceive in like fashion."

Looking down into the second valley Dante saw a shade plunged in filth and so befouled that it was not possible to discover whether he was a layman or a priest.

SHADE

"Why are you more keen to stare at me than at all the other filthy ones?"

DANTE

"Because, if my memory is not playing me a trick, I have ere now seen you with dry hair, and you are Alessio Interminei of Lucca.[2] That is why I stare more at you than all others."

ALESSIO

"Down here the flatteries with which my tongue was never cloyed have submerged me."

CANTO XIX

The third valley of Malebolge. Simonists; those who buy and sell the things of God for money. Here Dante sees the stone floor of the valley full of holes and out of each, up to the calf, a pair of legs

[2] The only fact known of him is that he was a flatterer.

protruding; the soles of the feet covered with flames.

DANTE

"Who is he, master, who seems to suffer more than his companions, and whom a hotter flame licks?"

VIRGIL

"If you are willing to have me carry you down there, you shall learn from him about his wrongs."

DANTE

"Whatever pleases you is to my liking. You are Lord, and you know that my will is your will, and you understand me although I say not a word."

Virgil carries Dante down.

DANTE

"O miserable soul, whoever you may be that stays upside down, planted like a stake, speak to me if you can."

SHADE

"Are you already here, Boniface? Are you so soon sated with that for the sake of which you did

not fear to seize by treachery the beautitful Lady[1] and then to do her outrage?"

I was like those who, because they do not comprehend an answer, stand as if mocked, not knowing what to reply.

VIRGIL

"Tell him quickly, 'I am not he, I am not he whom you think.' "

I did as I was directed.

SHADE

"What is it, then, that you want of me? If to learn who I am concerned you so much that it brought you down here, know that I wore the Great Mantle. It is true I was a son of the She-Bear,[2] so eager to advance the cubs, that up in the world I put riches, and down here myself, into the sack.[3] Beneath me are the others who practised simony before me, pushed down, flattened through the cracks of the rock. There below, in my turn, I shall sink down when he for whom I mistook you, comes."

[1] The Church, Bride of Christ, which Pope Boniface VIII got by a trick played on Celestine V, in order to win the Papacy for himself.

[2] She-Bear, the emblem on the arms of the Orsini family, of which family Pope Nicholas III was a member. It is the shade of Nicholas III who is talking.

[3] He put money, got by simony, into his purse and as a result got himself put into the valley, pouch, purse, Malebolge.

DANTE

"Tell me, pray, how much money did our Lord insist on having from St. Peter before He would trust the keys to him? Surely he asked nothing save, 'Follow thou me.'[4] Neither did Peter or the others receive gold or silver from Matthias when he was chosen by lot for the place left empty by the guilty one.[5] And were it not for reverence of those supreme keys which you held on Earth, I would use yet harder words because your[6] avarice afflicts the world, trampling down the good and exalting the bad. You shepherds the Evangelist had in mind when he beheld her that sitteth on the waters fornicating with kings. You have made you a god of gold and silver. And what difference is there between you and the idolaters save that they adore one, and you a hundred? Ah, Constantine! of how much ill was mother, not your conversion, but the gift which the first rich Father received from you."[7]

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[4] Matthew xvi:19. John xxi:19-22.

[5] Acts i:15-26.

[6] The plural, "your," means the pastors of the Church generally.

[7] The donation by the Emperor Constantine of the States of the Church, and of the entire temporal power of the West, to Pope Sylvester I. This "donation," or gift, now known to have been a forgery, was believed in by all, formerly.

CANTO XX

Fourth valley. In it suffer all those who in life had been fortune-tellers, diviners and magicians.

CANTOS XXI AND XXII

Fifth valley. Here are punished the malicious stirrers-up of discord.

CANTO XXIII

Sixth valley. Hypocrites.

There below we discovered a painted people, who, in tears, were moving with extremely slow steps, and in look were weary and depressed. They wore cloaks with hoods lowered before their eyes, fashioned after those worn by the monks of Cluny. Outwardly they are gilded and glisten, but within they are lead, and so heavy that those which Frederick used to have put on were of straw by comparison.[1] O mantle of eternal weariness!

Because of this weight, those weary shades were proceeding so slowly that at every step we had new companions.

[1] Frederick used to put lead coverings, or cloaks, on criminals who were to be burned to death.

DANTE

"Contrive to find some one who may be known by deed or name, and as we go along cast your eyes around."

One who recognized the Tuscan dialect,[2] called out behind us:

"Wait, you who are making your way so rapidly through the dark air. Maybe you can learn what you want to know from me."

VIRGIL

"Stop a moment, and then make his pace yours."

I stopped and saw two who, by their expression, showed great haste of mind to be with me, but their load and the crowded way held them back.

When they had come up, with sidelong glance, they stared at me some time without saying a word; then turned to each other.

SHADE

"By the movement of his throat when he speaks I take him to be alive, but if he belongs among the dead, by what right does he go without the heavy robe?"

[2] He recognized the peculiar dialect or speech of Florence, namely Tuscan.

Then he said, turning to me:

"O Tuscan, who to the assembly of the wretched hypocrites has come, be not too proud to tell us who you are."

DANTE

"I was born and raised by the fair river Arno, at the great town, and I have the flesh that I have always had. But who are you in whom such misery distils, as I see upon your cheeks? What is this punishment that so glitters on you?"

SHADE

"The golden cloaks are of lead so thick that their weight makes our shoulders creak. Jolly[3] Friars were we, and our town was Bologna; I called Catalano; he Loderingo. Together, we were chosen by your city, as one man alone is usually chosen for guardian of the peace."[4]

DANTE

"O Friars, your misdeeds"—

But further I did not go for my eye caught sight

[3] Jolly because of their free and easy ways of life.

[4] Being of opposing political parties, and outsiders, they were invited to Florence and elected to hold, and administer cojointly, the office of chief magistrate, the idea being to get a fair government. The outcome was a miserable failure, for Catalano and Loderingo soon lost the public confidence because of their hypocrisy and peculations.

of one crucified upon the ground. When he saw me he writhed all over, breathing sighs into his beard.

CATALANO

"That transfixed creature on whom you are looking counseled the Pharisees that it was expedient to put one man to torture for the people.[5] Naked and across the path, as you see, he must feel how much each one weighs who passes. And in the same manner his father-in-law[6] is stretched out in this valley, along with the others of that Council which, for the Jews, was the beginning of trouble."

Then I saw Virgil puzzled and astonished[7] over him who lay crucified so shamefully in this place of eternal exile.

CANTOS XXIV AND XXV

Seventh valley. The ascent from the sixth valley, or *bolge,* to the top of the division wall between

[5] Caiaphas, who said: "It is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people." John xi:50.

[6] Annas. "Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest." John xviii:24.

[7] Virgil was of course unaware of the story of Christ's Crucifixion. Dante's representing him as utterly baffled by the sight and story of these crucified hypocrites, is a characteristic touch of genius. It compels our acceptance of the narrative for truth, and it calls to, and fills the mind with, thoughts of an hypocrisy which has played a tremendous rôle in the world's history for nearly two thousand years and in doing so gives the weight of authority and importance to the entire scene.

it and the seventh, is very difficult, the bridge being down. Dante is alarmed, for he sees at a glance that his guide is worried, but soon his courage is restored by Virgil's hopeful expression, and the fact that he actually takes him in his arms and carries him up the precipice. The canto opens with a long simile based on Dante's fear, followed by the renewal of hope and faith. The thought of a sweet, calm, rural scene, and the atmosphere of serenity which the simile here introduces is in itself a marvel,—few word landscapes are its equal—while the quiet and peace of it, offer a moment of welcome relief from the horrors that precede and follow. In this moment the mind is prepared, as it were, by the very beauty of the picture, and the contrast with what follows it, for appreciating the still greater horrors to come. For sheer economy of effort with a maximum of effect, in piling anguish and terror mountain high, and a consummate knowledge of the value of contrast, as well as gradation, the last ten cantos of Hell are unsurpassed.

The simile of the fireflies, Hell, Canto XXVI, and the entrancing description of the brooks of the Casentino, Hell, Canto XXX, belong in the same class, and serve the same purpose, the Casentino more even than the others.

In that part of the new year when the sun's rays

grow warm, and he enters Aquarius,[1] and the nights are shortening toward the south,[2] when upon the Earth the hoar-frost makes a likeness of her white sister, though the work of her pen is short lived, the peasant whose supplies fail, goes out and looks about and sees the fields all white, whereat he strikes his thigh in despair and returns indoors again, grumbling the while, like a poor fellow who knows not what to do; then once more goes out and picks up hope, seeing the world to have changed look in a short time, and takes his crook and drives his sheep to pasture.

In the twenty-fifth canto there occurs an extraordinary passage based on a portion of Ovid's Metamorphoses, not a copy of it; an instance of Dante's power to make a thing which utterly surpasses human experience and transcends belief, appear credible. The most commonplace and familiar of every-day occurrences is knit up with the miraculous, in such a manner as keeps both constantly and vividly before the reader's mind, the result produced being that rarest of all things, poetic conviction.

Three shades suddenly make their presence known to Dante and Virgil, by calling to them for their names. While Dante is peering at them, one says:

[1] The eleventh sign of the Zodiac which the sun enters on January 21st.

[2] Lengthening days, and nights growing shorter.

"Where can Cianfa[3] have strayed?"

Dante motions to Virgil to be attentive and then, together, they behold the miracle begin, and watch it to the end. The subject is one Agnello, a fraudulent thief like Cianfa.

If, Reader, you are loath to believe what I am about to tell, it will be no wonder, for I who saw it scarcely believe it. While I looked at the three shades, a serpent with six feet darted in front of one of them and laid hold all over him. With its middle feet it hugged his belly; with its forefeet it laid hold on his arms, then stuck its teeth in both his cheeks. Its hind legs it spread out upon his thighs, and put its tail between, and stretched it up behind. Ivy never clung so tight upon a tree as the horrible beast wound its own about the other's limbs. Then they melted together as if they had been hot wax, and mingled their color, and now neither seemed the same which it had been. It was as when fire consumes paper, a dark color, not yet black, runs up the sheet, and the white vanishes. Meantime the other two shades were looking on and each cried: "O me! Agnel,[3] how you change! You are neither two nor one." Now the two heads became one, and there appeared to be two countenances so mingled

[3] One whose reputation for being a fraudulent thief has lasted, but of whom nothing is known.

in one face that both were lost. The two arms, and the beasts' forefeet, thighs and legs, belly and chest, became parts never seen before. Every original look had vanished. Both, and neither, appeared the perverted image, and such, with slow step it went away.

As a lizard going from hedge to hedge in the fierce heat of dog-days flashes, if it cross one's path, such seemed a small fiery serpent, livid and black as a pepper corn, coming toward the bellies of the pair that were molten together. It pierced the navel of one of them, then fell down stretched out before him. The pierced one gazed at it, but did not speak; nay with feet fixed, he began to yawn, just as if sleep or fever had fallen on him. He looked on the serpent and the serpent on him. Each was smoking violently, one at the wound, the other at the mouth, and the smoke mingled together. After this let Lucan be silent, where he tells of the miserable Sabellus and of Nasidius,[4] and let him pause to hear that which is now about to be revealed. Let Ovid be silent about Cadmus and Arethusa, for if, in writing poetry, he changes him into a serpent, and her into a fountain, I do not grudge it to him, for never did he transmute creatures front to front, so that the spiritual beings of both were prompt to exchange their material substance. They responded

[4] Sabellus, bitten by a snake, melted away. Nasidius, bitten by another, swelled up until he burst his armor.

to one another in such a fashion, that the serpent divided his tail into a fork, and the wounded shade drew his feet together so that they became one. The legs and thighs stuck so close together, that in short time the place where they were joined showed no mark. The cleft tail was taking on the shape that the legs were losing. Its skin was becoming soft, and theirs, hard. I beheld the arms drawn in at the armpits, and the two feet of the beast grow long in proportion as the arms grew short.

While the smoke gives each a color other than his own, and brings out hair in one part, and strips it from another, the one rose up and the other fell down, yet not for all this did they take their evil eyes, beneath which each was changing, off each other. He who was standing drew his muzzle up toward his temples, and out of the excess of material, ears appeared on the smooth cheeks. The material which did not run back, but was kept, of its overabundance formed a nose for the face and thickened the lips as much as was needed. He that was lying down pushed his muzzle forward and drew his ears backward into his head, as the snail its horns. And his tongue which was whole, and suited for speaking, split itself, and the cleft tongue of the other closed up, and the smoke stopped. The shade that had turned beast fled hissing along the valley, and the other spluttered behind it. Then he turned his back on him, and said to the third mem-

ber of the group, "I want Buoso to run, as I have, on his belly along this path."

Thus I saw the vile occupants of the seventh valley change and transmute. And in this place let the novelty of the subject be my excuse if my style is a little overdetailed.

CANTOS XXVI AND XXVII

The eighth valley. Fraudulent counselors. The twenty-sixth canto opens with a fiercely ironical apostrophe to his native town.

Rejoice, O Florence, since you are so great that your wings stretch o'er land and sea, and your name is familiar throughout Hell!

In this valley of Malebolge Dante sees lights, forked flames or tongues of fire, each of which wraps the shade of some one who gave counsel with the intent to deceive. It is here that he makes use of the fireflies[1] in so remarkable a figure, and then heightens the color of his picture by a reference to Elijah, a charming bit of nature, and a story for ages stamped with sacred authority, both successfully used to attract the reader's attention and chain it upon the strange punishment of the eighth valley.

[1] See Cantos XXIV-XXV, prefatory note.

As numerous as the fireflies which, in the season when the sun shines longest, the peasant, who at twilight, when flies go and gnats come, is taking his ease on the hillside, sees down in the valley, perhaps where he gathers grapes and plows—with flames so numerous, the whole of the eighth pit was flashing I perceived, as soon as I was where I could get a view of the bottom. And as he[2] who was avenged by the bears beheld the chariot of Elijah at its departure, when the fiery horses[2] rose straight into Heaven—for he could not follow it so as to distinguish more than the flame which rose like a little cloud—so in like manner here, every flame was moving along this valley, for none shows what it conceals, yet every one hides a sinner.

VIRGIL

"Within these flames are spirits. Each is wrapped by that with which he is burnt."

DANTE

"Master, who is in that flame which now approaches and which is so divided at the tip that it looks as if it rose from the pyre on which Eteocles and his brother were laid?"

[2] Elisha. 2 Kings ii:9-24.

VIRGIL

"Within that fire Ulysses and Diomed are tormented, and thus they go together in punishment, as of old in wrath."

Dante expresses a strong desire to hear these spirits of the fire speak, and Virgil immediately approves, saying that it will be best, however, for him to make the request, "for, because they were Greeks they would pay no heed to your words," meaning perhaps that they would not understand Italian.

VIRGIL

"O you, who are two within a single flame, if I deserved of you while I lived, if I deserved of you much or little, when in the world I wrote my noble verses, move not, but let one of you tell where, after losing his course, he went to meet death."

ULYSSES

"When I left Circe, who had kept me more than a year near Gaeta, before Æneas named it, neither affection for my son, nor piety towards my aged father, nor the proper love which should have been the delight of Penelope, could outweigh my zeal for experience of the world, and of the vices of men,

and of their virtue. I put out upon the deep, open sea, with one ship only, and with the few companions who had not forsaken me. I saw one shore and the other, as far as Spain, as far as Morocco; the island of Sardinia, and the other islands bathed by the sea. I and my companions were old men and slow, when we reached the narrow strait where Hercules set up his bounds with the intention that man should not sail beyond. On the right hand I left Seville. I had already left Ceuta on the other. 'O brothers,' I cried, 'you who through a hundred thousand dangers have reached the West, to the brief remainder of your life wish not to deny experience, following the sun, of the world that has no inhabitants. Consider your origin; you were not made to live like brutes, but for the pursuit of virtue and wisdom.' With this brief speech I made my comrades so eager for the voyage that afterward I could hardly have kept them back. Holding our stern to the East, of our oars we made wings for the mad flight, always steering southwestward. The night now showed all the stars of the other pole, while ours were so low that they rose not above the ocean floor. Five times the moon had changed since we began to voyage the deep, when a mountain loomed dark in the distance, and it seemed to me higher than ever I had seen one. We rejoiced, but soon our gladness turned to lamentation, for, forth from the strange land, a whirlwind swept, and struck our

ship's bow. Three times it made her turn around, and the fourth it made her stern lift up, and her prow go down, as pleased Another, till the sea had closed over us."[2]

CANTO XXVIII

The ninth valley. In it are punished the sowers of discord and schism.

CANTOS XXIX AND XXX

The tenth and last valley of Malebolge.[1] Falsifiers of every sort—of metals, the alchemists—and those who pretend to be who and what they

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[2] This story which Dante puts into the mouth of Ulysses is entirely unlike the story of Ulysses's peaceful end as given in the *Odyssey*, xi. It is probably Dante's own invention. Some Genoese voyages in search of a western continent were made during the last decade of the thirteenth century, one in 1291, of which nothing was ever heard. This may have given Dante the idea of sending Ulysses out beyond the Pillars of Hercules into the unknown Atlantic. Ulysses' character is shown in the traditional aspect as described in the *Odyssey*, but the circumstances, one and all, are as original with Dante as in themselves they are fascinating. It is not easily conceivable that the thirst for knowledge and experience, for its own sake, could be more completely described, or that a more moving speech in behalf of such thirst could be made to human beings keen already beyond ordinary. The story carries with it the very breath of youth, the youth of all that voyaging in search of a new world, not destined to become the reality of finding for two centuries after Dante's time. It is an inspired as well as a formulaic utterance concerning man's willingness to make sacrifices for the sake of knowledge, and his insatiate love of novelty.

[1] See Prefatory note, Cantos XVIII to XXX inc., page 99.

are not, counterfeiters and perjurers. They are punished with the most repulsive diseases, mental and physical.

Such misery was here as there would be if, between July and September, the sick from all the hospitals of Valdichiana, Maremma and Sardinia were together in a single ditch. Such stench came up thence as comes from rotting flesh. I do not believe it was greater sorrow to see the whole people sick in Ægina[2] when the air was so full of pestilence that the animals, even the little worm, fell dead. One lay on his own belly, and one on the shoulders of another, and one on all fours shifted his place along the dismal road. Step by step, without a word, we went, looking at, and listening to these sick ones who could not raise themselves.

One of the shades speaks to Dante, saying:

"Look sharp at me so that you may clearly discern my face and you will perceive that I am the shade of Capoccio,[3] who by alchemy falsified the metals, and you should recall, if my eyes serve me aright, how good an ape of nature I was."

A shade utterly distorted by dropsy, the punish-

[2] Story told by Ovid of the whole population of Ægina dying by pestilence.

[3] It is supposed that Dante and Capoccio had been acquainted in life.

ment given him for having made counterfeit money, addresses Dante. At the beginning of his story he makes use of the lovely figure[4] based on the brooks of the Casentino, a peaceful, pastoral district in the upper valley of the Arno. The shade that speaks is Master Adam of Brescia, who was persuaded to counterfeit the coin of Florence by Count Guido, of Romena. The calm beauty of the figure with which Master Adam begins his story serves to heighten the sense of personal suffering almost beyond comprehension. It also furnishes a last touch of relief before the final descent to the bottommost circle of Hell where Dante is to find fratricides and traitors in a motionless world of ice, and last of all, Judas Iscariot, everlastingly consumed, his parts reassembled and then reconsumed, by Lucifer himself. If, as Leigh Hunt said, the Francesca episode is like a "lily in the mouth of Tartarus," the Casentino picture is like a bit of the Vale of Tempe in the abyss of Hades. If ever there was a perfect instance of the appreciation of Wordsworth's doctrine, "From Nature doth emotion come, and moods of Calmness equally are Nature's gift," it is to be found in this passage, and in the use made of the Casentino brooks. Again here, as in the fifth canto of Hell, Dante takes the opportunity to declare in a form of imperishable beauty the imperishable fact that the possible suffering of the

[4] See Cantos XXIV-XXV. Prefatory note.

mind far outweighs the extremest possible suffering of the flesh; that there is no greater woe than remembering in misery the happy time.[5] But, as with pictures, more can be learned by looking at them than by hearing or reading about them, so is it with the works of a poet like Dante. The real excuse for a comment on any of the things of poetry is that it may lead others to prove its value by examining into the things which gave rise to the comment, and so learn to love it themselves.

MASTER ADAM

"O you, who are without punishment, and I know not why, in this dark underworld, behold and consider the misery of Master Adam. In life I had enough of what I wished, and now I long for a single drop of water. The little brooks that from the green hills of the Casentin run down into the Arno, keeping their courses cool and moist, stand ever before me, and not without effect. The vision of them parches me more than the disease because of which I strip the flesh from my face. Inflexible justice goads me. Romena[6] was where I counterfeited the coin stamped with the Baptist,[7] for which on Earth I left my body burnt. But if I could see

[5] Canto V.

[6] Romena, a village in the Casentino valley.

[7] The Baptist was patron saint of Florence and his figure was on its coins.

the wretched soul of Guido or Alesandro[8] in this place, I would not exchange the sight for Fonte Branda.[9] One of them is already here, if the furious shades that can move about tell me the truth, but how does that help me who am bound fast? If I were only light enough to move a single inch in a hundred years, already I should have started out upon the road to seek him among these deformed people, in spite of the fact that the road circles eleven miles around.[10] It is they who are the cause of my being among such folk. They persuaded me to coin the florins which contained three carats of base metal."

DANTE

"Who are those two poor wretches steaming like wet hands in winter, lying huddled together on your right hand?"

MASTER ADAM

"Here I found them when I was hurled down into this chasm. They have not moved since, and I do not believe that they will move to all eternity.

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[8] The men who inveigled Master Adam into doing the counterfeiting.

[9] A famous fountain in Siena.

[10] An interesting example of Dante's concreteness of statement made to convince the reader of the reality of the place which he is describing.

One is the false woman who accused Joseph.[11] The other is that perjurous Sinon,[12] the Greek, from Troy. Because of their high fever do they think so."

And one of them who was perhaps annoyed by being called hard names struck Master Adam in the stomach. The sound was like a drum. Thereon Master Adam hit him a blow in the face which seemed not softer, saying to him:

"Although I can not move because of my heavy legs, yet have I an arm free for such need as this."

SINON

"When you were on your way to be burned you had no free arm, though free enough when you were at your counterfeiting."

MASTER ADAM

"Of this you speak truly, but you were not so trustworthy a witness when questioned about the facts at Troy."

SINON

"If I bore false testimony, you counterfeited, and I am here for one sin, but you for more than any other demon."[13]

[11] Potiphar's wife, Gen. xxxix, 7 et seq.

[12] Sinon, the treacherous Greek who got the wooden horse into Troy.

[13] Each counterfeit coin is reckoned a sin.

MASTER ADAM

"Perjurer, remember the wooden horse, and sorry for you is it that all the world remembers."

SINON

"And ill for you be the thirst that cracks your tongue, and the foul water which lifts your belly like a barrier before your eyes."

MASTER ADAM

"Your mouth opens to its own hurt, for if I have thirst and the water of dropsy gorges me, you have fever and headache; to lick the mirror of Narcissus you would not need a second invitation."

I stood transfixed while listening to them. Virgil said sharply:

"Take your fill of looking. Not much more were needed to make me quarrel with you."

When I heard him speak to me in anger, I turned, o'ercome with a shame that even yet lingers in my memory. And as he who dreams of his own harm, and dreaming, hopes that it is a dream, so that he wishes for what really is, as if it were something

else,[14] such I became, powerless to speak, for I wanted to excuse myself, and all the time was excusing myself, though it never occurred to me that I was doing so.

VIRGIL

"Less shame would condone graver fault than yours. Therefore lay aside all regret and remember that I am ever at your side, if you should again happen to be where people are in a similar brawl; for the wish to hear this sort of thing is a base wish."[15]

CANTO XXXI

The inner wall of Malebolge, where the circular precipice of Hell falls away suddenly and deeply to the ninth circle, technically speaking, the Pit of Hell.

[14] The "something else" would be the reality of waking. If he were awake he would wish himself in a dream so that by waking he might be rid of the fear of harm. It is one of the many similes which Dante draws from mental experience.

[15] Virgil's stern rebuke to Dante for allowing himself to become engrossed in following a scandalous brawl is one of the many ways, internal evidences, to make use of a commonplace of critical erudition, by which the reader of *The Divine Comedy* may know with certainty what were its author's ideals of behavior; in a word, what was Dante's notion of a gentleman. Among other requirements, this he lays down, not to heed backyard bickerings, low quarrels of vulgar or dishonest persons, which, translated into modern phrase, would mean not giving heed or time to yellow journalism, or slander. It is true beyond doubt that there are few books which really enable the reader to know the sort of man their author was so completely as *The Divine Comedy,* for although, in one sense, Dante always keeps himself in the background, in another he is always in the foreground.

Here it was less than night and less than day, so that my sight took in but little. I heard a mighty horn reverberating. So loud was it that all thunder, by comparison, would sound faint.

The precipice is guarded by giants who stand on the floor of the Pit below and rise, from the waist up, above the encircling ledge of Malebolge. At first, in the twilight, Dante mistakes these giants for towers, but later discovers their real nature; he says that as he—

drew nearer and nearer to the brink, error left me and fear grew upon me. It is certain that Nature when she ceased to make such creatures did exceeding well to take from Mars such soldiery, and, though she does not repent of elephants and whales, he who thinks carefully esteems her therefore only more just and prudent. For where the power of reason is added to evil disposition, and to strength, the human race can make no defense against it.

One of the giants, Antæus, known because of his fight with Hercules, who slew him, took Virgil and Dante in his arms, and, says Dante, at the close of the canto:

gently in the depth that engulfs Lucifer with Judas set us down.

Such was the wonderful manner of their descent to the ninth and last circle of Hell.

CANTOS XXXII, XXXIII AND XXXIV

The ninth circle and the first two rings of the Pit; a place which slopes inward from all sides to a point, the apex of Hell, and the center of the Earth. The sloping floor is ice, and by this the various sinners are more or less covered. The whole area is divided into four concentric rings, only to be recognized from one another by the increasing severity of their punishments. This is the place of those who in committing fraud broke some special tie or bond. Canto XXXII deals with the first two circles; Caina, where traitors to their kin, and Antenora, where traitors to their country, suffer.

To describe the bottom of the whole universe is no task to undertake in jest, nor one for a tongue that cries mamma and papa.

A little later Dante apostrophizes the treacherous spirits of the Pit.

O you, more than all others, born in an evil hour, who are in the place so difficult to picture, better had it been for you if in the world you had been sheep and goats!

When we had reached the dark chasm beneath the feet of the giants, much lower down, and I was still gazing at the lofty wall, I heard:

"Be careful how you step; walk so that you will not trample under foot the heads of your miserable weary brothers."

At this I turned and saw before me, and beneath my feet, a lake which, because of the cold, had the appearance of glass and not of water.[1]

Here, neck-high in the ice of Caina, Dante sees traitors, murderers of kin, and fratricides.

Every one held his face turned downward. At the mouth the cold gives proof,[2] and sadness of heart, at the eyes.

I saw a thousand faces by the cold made to show what it really means to grin and bear, because of which I shudder, and shall always at the sight of frozen pools.[3]

And while we were moving toward the center to which all gravity collects, and I was shivering in the eternal chill, whether it was the will of Heaven, or destiny, or fortune, I do not know, but walking

[1] The ice is significant of the cold-hearted nature of treachery.

[2] The chattering of their teeth shows how cold, and their tears how wretched they are.

[3] A remarkable instance of Dante's realism.

among the heads, I struck my foot full in the face of one. Wailing, he[4] upbraided me:

SHADE

"Why do you kick me? If you come not to increase the vengeance of Mont'Aperti, why molest me?"

DANTE

"Master, wait for me here, so that this spirit may dispel a doubt I have. Afterward you shall hurry as much as you like."

My guide stopped, and I said to the shade, still bitterly blaspheming:

"Who are you to rebuke another?"

SHADE

"Now who are you that goes through Antenora, striking the cheeks of others so that if you were alive it would pass endurance?"

DANTE

"I am alive, and it may be dear to you, if you insist on fame, that I set your name among my other verses."

[4] Bocca degli Abati, the basest of traitors of Florence, at the battle of Mont'Aperti, 1260, cut off the hand of the standard bearer and so brought about the rout and destruction of the Florentines.

SHADE

"My wish is for the opposite. Take yourself off and trouble me no more, for you little know how to flatter in this place."

Thereupon I seized him by the hair on the back of his head, and said:

"You shall tell me your name, else I will not leave a hair upon you."

SHADE

"Though you strip me of hair I will not tell you who I am, or let you find out, though you strike your foot against my head a thousand times."

I had already twisted his hair, and had pulled out more than one lock, he barking and holding his eyes steadily down, when another shade snarled out:

"What ails you, Bocca? Is it not enough to chatter your teeth, but you must bark too? What devil is at you?"

DANTE

"Speak not, accursed traitor, for to your shame will I take true news of you to Earth."

BOCCA

"Be gone now, and tell what you will, but be not silent, if ever you go forth from this place, concerning him whose tongue tattled so readily. He here laments the silver of the French.[5] You can say, 'I saw him of Duera among the sinners in the cold.'"

We had just left this one when I caught sight of two shades frozen in one hole so that the head of one of them overlapped that of the other. As bread is devoured in hunger, so the upper set his teeth upon the lower, there where brain and nape join.

DANTE

"O you, who, like the beasts, show such hatred for him whom you are eating, tell me the reason, and on this condition, that if you have just cause against him, knowing who you are, and his sin, I may yet make you even with him in the upper world, provided I live to tell the tale."

The story which follows is that of Count Ugolino, probably the most famous single story in *The*

[5] Buoso da Duera, a traitor who took bribes from the French in 1265, and therefore allowed their army to proceed through Italy on its way to the conquest of the kingdom of Naples.

Divine Comedy. It relates the history of men who, for private ends, turned traitors to their country, and of friends who, for personal aggrandizement, turned treacherously against one another.

From his savage meal that sinner lifted his mouth wiping it with hair he had torn from the back of the other's head. Then he began:

"You ask me to renew a desperate sorrow, the mere thought of which bows down my heart before I have said a single word. But, if what I say shall be the seed that may bear fruit of infamy for the traitor whom I gnaw, you shall see me speak and weep together. I do not know who you are, or how you have come down here, but by your speech you surely are a Florentine. Know then that I was Count Ugolino, and this other the Archbishop Ruggieri. Now I will tell you why I am so hostile a neighbor. There is no need to tell how, as result of his malicious thoughts, I, putting my trust in him, was seized and killed. But what you can not have heard, namely, how cruel my death was, that you shall hear, and then shall you judge if he has done me wrong.

"A narrow opening in the prison which, from me, gets the name of Famine, and in which others must yet be shut up, had already shown me many moons before I had the bad dream which rent for me the veil of the future.

"This one appeared to be leader of the hunt, pursuing the wolf and his whelps upon the mountain which prevents the Pisans seeing Lucca. With lean, eager, and well-trained hounds he had set in front of him the Gualandi, Sismondi, and Lanfranchi.[6] After a short chase the father and his sons seemed weary and I thought I saw their flanks ripped by the hounds' sharp fangs.

"When I woke before dawn next day, I heard my sons, who were with me, wailing in their sleep, and asking for bread. Truly you are hard if already you do not grieve at the thought of that which my heart foresaw. If you do not shed tears at this, for what are you in the habit of weeping? They were now awake and the time was drawing near when food used to be brought to us, and because of his dream each was fearful. Down below I heard the door of the horrible tower being nailed up.[7] At

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[6] Three important Pisan families.

[7] The only parallel to this in English is the "knocking" in Macbeth, the effect of which De Quincey, in his essay, *The Knocking at the Gate,* has analyzed with extraordinary delicacy of perception and understanding. It deals with the speech (*Macbeth,* Act ii, Sc. 2). "Whence is that knocking? How is't with me, when every noise appals me?"

What De Quincey says of the structure of a great work of poetry as reflecting the structure and character of a great poet's mind, in Shakespeare's case, is equally applicable to Dante's.

"O Mighty Poet! Thy works are not as those of other men, simply and merely great works of art; but are also like the phenomena of nature, like the sun and the sea, the stars and the flowers, like frost and snow, rain, dew, hail-storm and thunder which are to be studied with entire submission of our own

this I looked on the faces of my sons, but said never a word. I could not weep, I was so turned to stone. They wept, and my poor little Anselm said, 'You stare so, father, what ails you?' I did not shed a tear for this, nor did I answer all that day, nor the following night, nor until the next sun was rising. When a slender beam found its way into our sad dungeon I learned from their four faces what my own appearance was. I bit my hands in misery, and they, thinking that I did so through desire of eating, suddenly raised themselves up, and said: 'Father, it will be far less pain to us if you eat of us; you did clothe us with this wretched flesh, and do you strip it off.' I quieted them, not to make them more sad. That day and the next we all stayed dumb. Ah! cruel Earth! why did you not open? After the fourth day Gaddo threw himself stretched out at my feet, crying: 'My father, why do you not help me?' Here he died, and, as you see me, I saw the other three fall, one after another, between the fifth day and the sixth. Then I, already blind, began groping over them, and for two days after they were dead I called them. Then hunger did for me what sorrow could not do."

When he had finished, with eyes askance, he again

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faculties, and in the perfect faith that in them there can be no too much or too little, nothing useless or inert, the further we press in our discoveries, the more we shall see proofs of design and self-supporting argument where the careless eye had seen nothing but accident.

seized the wretched skull with his teeth, that were strong like a dog's upon a bone.

Ah, Pisa! disgrace to the people of the fair country where sounds the si![8] Since your neighbors are slow to punish you, may Caprara and Gorgona[9] move landward, and dike Arno's mouth so that every person in you shall be drowned. For even if Count Ugolino was reported to have betrayed you in your strongholds you were not justified in so torturing his sons.

CANTO XXXIV

The scene is laid in the fourth ring of the Pit, the very bottom of Hell, called Judecca after Judas Iscariot, arch-traitor. With the betrayer of Christ are also Brutus and Cassius, the betrayers of Julius Cæsar, who was the founder of that Empire which was divinely appointed for the earthly dwelling of the Church. With them, and tormenting them, at the apex of Hell, is Lucifer, rebel angel, traitor to God. When Virgil and Dante pass the center of gravity, which is in the center of Lucifer's body, they begin their ascent from Hell, going in the opposite direction to that of their descent, and so ultimately emerging in the upper air, and the southern hemisphere.

[8] Dante means the common language of Italy in which *si* is the word for *yes*.

[9] Islands lying a little way from the mouth of the Arno, on whose banks Pisa is located.

VIRGIL

"*Vexilla regis prodeunt inferni*[1] toward us; therefore look forward. Seek to discern him if you can."

As a distant windmill appears in dense fog, or at the hour when the heavens are darkening to night, such the thing that I saw there looked to me.

Because of the wind, I got behind my leader. There was no other shelter. I was now, with fear and trembling do I put it into verse, there where the shades were altogether covered, and only showed through like straws in glass. Some lie down; some are erect, this one with his head, that one with his soles uppermost. Another, bow-like, bends his face to his feet.

When we had advanced so far that it pleased my master to show me the creature which had the fair semblance, he moved from in front of me, saying:

"Behold, Dis! Behold the place where you must put on fortitude!"

Ask not how cold and weak I became, for I do not write it, because no words can tell it. I did not die, nor did I remain alive. Picture to yourself, if you have aught of wit, what I became, deprived, alike of life and death.

The emperor of the realms of woe rose above the

[1] "The banners of the King of Hell advance." These are the opening words of a hymn in honor of the Cross.

ice from the middle of his breast up. I approach nearer to the stature of a giant, than giants to the size of his arms. Learn from this how vast must be the whole which is in proportion to such parts. If he was once as fair as he now is foul, and lifted up his brows against his Maker well may he have been the cause of all tribulation. Oh! how great a marvel it was to me that his head had three faces! The one in front was crimson red. The other two met this just over the middle of each shoulder. The three came together at the crown of his head. The right-hand face was sallow; the left, black, like the faces of those who come from the land of the Nile. Below each a pair of great wings protruded, in size proper for so huge a bird. Sails of the sea never saw I such. They had no feathers, but were built after the manner of the wings of bats. He was flapping them so that three winds issued from him. By these, all Cocytus[2] was frozen. With his six eyes he was weeping, and down over his three chins ran tears and bloody drivel. At each mouth he was crunching a sinner with his teeth, so that he was putting three of them to torment. To the sinner in front[3] the biting was nothing in comparison with the clawing, whereby sometimes his back would be completely stripped of skin.

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[2] Cocytus, one of the rivers of Hell, whose waters, frozen, form the ice of the Pit.

[3] Judas Iscariot.

VIRGIL

"That one up there who is suffering the greatest agony is Judas Iscariot; he who has his head within, and legs writhing outside. Of the other two whose heads hang down, he who dangles from the black mouth is Brutus. Cassius is the other. But night is again returning to the Earth and we must go, for we have seen the whole."

As he bade me, I put my arms about his neck, and he took advantage of time and place to catch hold on the hairy flank of Lucifer at a moment when his wings were spread wide apart. Down from shock to shock between matted hair and frozen scabs he picked his way. When we came to the thigh, just where the haunch is thickest, my leader, with effort, and short breaths, turned his head to where his legs had been and gripped the hair, as one does in climbing, so that I thought we were returning to Hell.

VIRGIL

"Hold tight, for by such stairs must we depart from so great evil."

At length he came forth through a cleft in the rock, and put me down to sit upon its edge.

Dante and Virgil have now passed the center of gravity and are arrived in the southern hemisphere.

In this change from the northern hemisphere to the southern, there is a corresponding change in time amounting to twelve hours. They will now spend about as long a period, twenty-four hours, in climbing to the surface of the Earth, as they have in descending from the surface of the northern hemisphere to the point of Hell, or center of the universe.

VIRGIL

"Get to your feet, the way is long and the road is difficult."

My leader and I at once set forth on the hidden path to return to the world of light. Without thought of resting we mounted up, he first, and I after him, far enough for me to see through a round opening some of the beautiful things of Heaven, and thence we came out, and again beheld the stars.[4]

[4] These were the morning stars, and the time was close upon five o'clock Easter morning. The stars, in themselves regarded by Dante as objects of extremest beauty, and constantly dwelt on, were also for him the instigators of hope and agents of inspiration. With the word *stelle*, stars, he ends each of the three parts of *The Divine Comedy*.

"Never was the very essence of vice so revealed as in the Inferno, where the poet, as with a scalpel, lays bare the secret motives of remembered and forgotten tragedies, anatomizing sinner after sinner to find 'the cause in nature that makes these hard hearts.'"—GARDNER.

PURGATORY

CANTOS I AND II

CANTO I

A low, beach-like shore, which girdles the mountain of Purgatory, and separates it from the sea.

PURGATORY

It is here, about an hour before sunrise, on Easter morning, that Dante and Virgil find themselves after emerging from the underworld.

To sail over better waters the little vessel of my genius now hoists her sails, leaving behind her so cruel a sea. I will now sing of the second realm, where the spirit of man is purified and made fit to ascend to Heaven.

A lovely tinge of sapphire was brightening on the tranquil face of Heaven, even to the horizon. It brought back delight to my eyes as soon as I came out from the dead air which had distressed both my seeing and my breathing. The fair planet which moves men to love[1] was making the whole eastern sky to smile, veiling the fishes that were in her train. I turned to the right, and saw four stars[2] never seen save by the first people.[3] The Heavens appeared to rejoice in their light. O northern region, widowed because deprived of seeing them!

When I had withdrawn my gaze from these, turning a little toward the north pole, from which the Great Bear had already vanished, I saw close by me a solitary old man in aspect worthy of so much reverence that no son can owe more to his father. He had a long beard, whitened like his hair, which fell in two sweeps upon his breast. The rays of the four holy stars so lit up his countenance that I saw him as I should, had he been facing the sun.

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[1] Venus at the Spring Equinox is in the sign of Pisces.
[2] These signify the cardinal virtues, Prudence, Temperance, Fortitude and Justice.
[3] Adam and Eve.

"Who are you that counter to the dark stream have escaped the eternal prison?" said he, his venerable locks swaying.

"Who has guided you? Or who was a lamp to light your way out of that black night which forever darkens the infernal valley. Are the laws of the abyss broken? Or is there a new decree in Heaven, that, being damned, you come to my rocks?"

Thereupon my guide took hold of me, and with words, hands, signs, made me bend my knees and incline my brow. Then he answered him:

"I came not of my own accord, but because of a lady, descended from Heaven, in reply to whose prayers I offered myself to this one as guide. But since you desire to know of the real nature of our condition, it is not my wish to deny it. This man has not yet seen his last evening, but because of his folly he was so near to it that short time remained for change. As I have told you, I was sent to rescue him, and there was no other course to follow but the one I have followed. I have shown him the guilty people, all; and now I mean to show him those souls who, under your jurisdiction, cleanse them of their sins. How I have brought him so far would be a long story. From on high I received the power to guide him to this place where he can see and hear you. May it please you to look graciously upon his coming. He goes in search of liberty,[4] the value of which is

[4] "The glorious liberty of the children of God." Romans viii:21.

known to him who gives his life for it. You[5] know this, since for the sake of it you did not find death bitter when, in Utica, you cast off that mortal vesture which shall indeed shine at the Resurrection. The everlasting laws are not broken for us. This man is alive, and Minos does not control me.[6] I am from the circle where are the chaste eyes of your Marcia, who, by her looks, still beseeches you to hold her for your own. By the love you have for her incline your heart to us; suffer us to proceed through your sevenfold domain.[7] I will report your goodness to her, if you will condescend to be mentioned there below."

CATO

"While I lived Marcia was so pleasant to my eyes that I granted every favor she desired. Now that her dwelling place is on the far side of the evil stream,[8] in conformity with that law which was made when I came forth from Hell, she can no longer move me.[9] But if, as you say, a lady from

[5] This is Cato, the younger, who took his own life rather than lose his liberty.

[6] Virgil's place in Hell is the first circle, Limbo, while Minos holds control from the second circle down.

[7] The seven circles of Purgatory.

[8] Acheron, the river which encircles Hell.

[9] The redeemed can not be concerned with the condition of the lost, no matter what the earthly relations between the two may have been, for to be sorry for the damned would be equivalent to regretting the justice, and doubting the goodness of God, and to do this would be inconsistent with the

Heaven sent you, you have no call for persuasive words. It is enough that in her name you ask my aid. Go your way, and see to it that you gird this man with a smooth rush, and that you wash his face clean of all grime, for it is not becoming to present one's self before the first of the Ministers of Paradise with eyes dimmed by any veil. Around the margin, down yonder where the waves break upon it, the soft mud of this little island bears rushes. No other plant that puts forth leaves or makes stems can live there because no other can bend with the waves. When you have done as I bid you, return no more this way. The sun which is just rising will show you how to take the mountain by an easier ascent."

Cato departs and Virgil and Dante go down to the shore.

My master spread his hands gently on the grass whereat I, who understood his purpose, stretched my tear-stained cheeks toward him. He washed clean the color of my face which Hell had covered up. Then we went down to that barren strand which never knew man return after setting sail upon its waters. Here he girt me even as Cato had directed.

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state of the redeemed, which state is one of perfect accord with the will of God.

CANTO II

We were lingering on the shore like people thinking of their road, in heart going forward, but in body moving not at all.

And lo! as when, upon the approach of morning,[1]
Through the gross vapours Mars grows fiery red
Down in the West upon the ocean floor,
Appeared to me—may I again behold it!—
A light along the sea so swiftly coming,
Its motion by no flight of wing is equalled;
From which when I a little had withdrawn
Mine eyes, that I might question my Conductor,
Again I saw it brighter grown and larger.
Then on each side of it appeared to me
I knew not what of white, and underneath it
Little by little there came forth another.
My Master yet had uttered not a word
While the first whiteness into wings unfolded;
But when he clearly recognized the pilot,
He cried: "Make haste, make haste to bow the knee!
Behold the Angel of God! fold thou thy hands!
Henceforward shalt thou see such officers!
See how he scorneth human arguments,
So that nor oar he wants, nor other sail
Than his own wings, between so distant shores.
See how he holds them pointed up to heaven,
Fanning the air with the eternal pinions,
That do not moult themselves like mortal hair!"
Then as still nearer and more near us came
The Bird Divine, more radiant he appeared,
So that, near by the eye could not endure him,
But down I cast it; and he came to shore
With a small vessel, very swift and light,
So that the water swallowed naught thereof.
Upon the stern stood the Celestial Pilot;
Beatitude seemed written in his face,
And more than a hundred spirits sat within.

[1] This lovely translation of the description of the sunrise, and the angel-steered boat, bringing and landing the souls of the saved upon the beach at the foot of Purgatory, is Longfellow's.

"In exitu Israel de Aegypto!"[2]
They chanted all together in one voice,
With whatso in that psalm is after written.
Then made he sign of holy rood[3] upon them,
Whereat all cast themselves upon the shore,
And he departed swiftly as he came.

The new-landed souls, being strange to the place, ask guidance of Dante and Virgil. Virgil tells them that he and his companion have likewise just arrived, though by another way, i. e., from Hell, and not, as the shades of the redeemed, from the mouth of the Tiber, where, at death, they gather.

I saw one of them come forward to embrace me with such great affection that it moved me to do the like. O shades, empty save in appearance! Thrice did I throw my arms about him, and as often did they return upon my own breast. With astonishment my countenance changed, whereat the shade smiled, and drew back, and I, pursuing it, pressed forward. Gently he bade me pause. I then realized who he[4] was, and I besought him to stay a little and to talk with me. He answered:

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[2] Psalm cxiv. "When Israel went up out of Egypt." Its appropriateness in this place is dependent upon the spiritual significance of going from a state of corruption to the freedom of eternal glory.

[3] Holy Cross.

[4] Casella was a musician and a friend of Dante's. Rarely has the essence of friendship, that "peculiar boon of Heaven," been so adequately and touchingly clothed in words, as in this passage.

"Even as I loved you in the mortal body, so, out of it, I love you still. That is why I stop. But wherefore do you take this journey?"

"My Casella,"[4] I replied, "in order that I may again return to where I now am. But, tell me, how is it that you have lost so much time?"[5]

CASELLA

"No wrong has been done me if he[6] who takes both when, and whom, he pleases, has many times denied me passage: for on a righteous will his will depends."

DANTE

"If a new rule[7] has not deprived you of the memory or the practise of that song of love with which, in times gone by, you quieted all my longings, may it please you therewith to comfort now my soul which, coming thither with its body, is so very weary."

"Love which in my heart discourseth with me," he then began so sweetly, that the sweetness yet stays with me.[8] My master, and the throng that

[5] Dante expresses surprise that Casella has not, in the time since his death, gone farther.

[6] The celestial pilot.

[7] Conditions different from those of Earth.

[8] Casella begins to sing a verse of Dante's own early writing which, probably, he had set to music. The gentleness and affection implied in Casella's choice of this song is equaled by the intense delight which Dante has just said was formerly his, when sung to by his friend on earth.

stood about, appeared so charmed that nothing else could get the attention of any one of them.

None stirred, and all of us were rapt by his strains; when suddenly, the venerable old man cried:

"What means it, laggard spirits? What negligence is this, and why this halting? Make haste to the mountain in order to strip off the veil which keeps you from seeing God."[9]

CANTOS III TO IX

Various parts of the region outside the Gate of Purgatory. This region is called Ante-Purgatory.

The spirits of those who put off repentance until the end of their lives are detained here. There are four distinct classes of them. First, those who became penitent at the hour of death, but died under ban of the Church. Second, those who from mere indolence put off repenting. Third, those who repented at the instant of being overtaken by violent death. Fourth, kings and princes who deferred repentance because of the cares of state.

The first of these four classes is compelled to wait in Ante-Purgatory for a period thirty times as long as on Earth they persisted in an unrepentant state. The other three are detained for a time equal to the length of their earthly lives. In every case

[9] Sin dims or veils man's eyes to the vision of God.

the time may be cut short by the prayers of the living.

CANTO III

Dante and Virgil meet a company of shades, and Virgil asks them the way. One of them, speaking to Dante, says:

"Whoever you are, turn your face toward me as you go. Think, if you did ever see me in the world?"

I turned to him, and looked steadfastly. He was blond and beautiful, and of gentle look, but a blow had severed one of his eyebrows.

When I humbly disclaimed ever having seen him, he said:

"Now look!"

and showed me a wound above his breast. Then, smiling:

"I am Manfred,[1] grandson of the Empress Constance, wherefore I entreat you upon your return, go to my fair daughter, parent of the glory of Sicily and Aragon, and tell her the truth, if other than the

[1] The illegitimate son of the Emperor Frederic II, who was king of Sicily. The Papacy was hostile to him, and he died, under ban of excommunication, at the battle of Benevento, in 1266. He desires the prayers of his daughter Constance for the lessening of the time before he can enter Purgatory proper, and the ultimate hastening of his entry into Paradise.

truth be told. After my body had been pierced by two mortal stabs, I, weeping, gave myself to Him who pardons willingly. My sins were horrible, but such wide arms has Infinite Goodness that it accepts all who turn to it. If the Pastor of Cosenza,[2] who by Clement was set to pursue me, had read aright this page of God's Word, my bones would still be at the head of the bridge near Benevento, under the heavy pile of stones. Now the rain washes them, and the wind moves them beyond the kingdom, hard by the Verde, whither, with unlighted candles, he carried them. Through curse like theirs man is not so lost that Eternal Love can not return so long as hope remains the least speck green. It is true that he who dies insubordinate to Holy Church, though he repent at the last, must remain outside, thirtyfold the whole time that he has lived in his presumption, if such decree be not shortened by good prayers. See if, hereafter, you can speed my happiness by revealing to my good Constance that you have seen me, and also my sentence, for in this place much may be gained by the prayers of those on Earth."

[2] The Pope ordered the Archbishop of Cosenza to disinter Manfred's body, and leave it dishonored, without funeral rites, unburied, as became the corpse of one dying under sentence of excommunication.

CANTO IV

The sun had climbed full fifty degrees, but I had not noticed it, when we came to a place where the shades, with one voice, cried out to us:

"Here is what you seek."

When grapes grow purple, the farm-hand often fills a larger gap in the hedge, with a forkful of thorns, than the passage by which my guide, and I following him, went up, after the troop of shades had left us. We ascended through the cleft rock, the wall pressing close on either side. The ground beneath required both feet and hands.

The summit was so lofty that it reached beyond my sight, and the slope was steeper far than forty-five degrees. I was weary, when I began:

"O gentle father, turn and see how I shall be left alone, if you do not wait for me."

"My son," said he, "drag yourself to that place," pointing to a ledge somewhat higher up, which on this side runs round the entire mountain. So spurred was I by his words that I forced myself forward, scrambling after him until the ledge was reached. There we both sat down, turning toward the east, whence we had come up, for to look back is sure to encourage a climber.

While sitting in this place Dante says:

"If it pleases you, gladly would I know how far

we have to go, for the hill rises higher than my eyes can reach."

VIRGIL

"This mountain is such[1] that always at the beginning it is difficult, but the higher one goes the less it tires him. When it shall seem so pleasant to you that climbing is as easy as going down stream in a boat, then will you be at the end of your journey. There you may expect to cease from toil. More I do not answer. This much I know to be true."

When he had stopped speaking a voice near by said:

"Before then, perhaps, you will be compelled to sit down."

Dante now discovers the shades of those, who, through indolence, had put off making their peace with God, seated in the shadow of a great rock, heads bent, and knees clasped. He who has just spoken turns out to be an old friend, a Florentine, reputed the laziest man who ever lived. Dante turns to him and says:

"I shall grieve no more[2] for you, Belacqua, but tell me why you are sitting here? Do you wait a

[1] This is an allegorical account of the progress of repentance which at the beginning is hard, but, persevered in, grows easier.

[2] Dante shows his own temper of mind in the humor of his

guide, or is it only that your accustomed sloth has resumed its sway?"

BELACQUA

"Brother, what's the use of going up? For God's winged angel that sits at the gate would not let me pass to the torments[3] within. It is necessary first that the Heavens shall revolve around me outside the gate, as long as they did in life, because I put off the sighs of repentance to the very last. Unless, sooner than this, the prayer of a heart that lives in grace, rises to my assistance, what help can come of the prayers of others, for they are not heard in Heaven?"

CANTO V

Virgil and Dante are surrounded by a large company of shades, of whom Virgil says:

"These people that press upon us are many, and they come to make a request of you, but keep on moving all the same, and listen as you go."

SHADES

"O soul that in the flesh to which you were born, is on the way to everlasting joy, tarry a little. Look, if ever you have seen any one of us, so that you may

relief at finding his friend among the elect, though, for indolence, "the same old sixpence."

[3] The sufferings to be undergone in Purgatory proper.

carry tidings of him back to Earth. Why do you press on? Why do you not stop? Every one of us was slain by violence, and a sinner to the last hour. Then light from Heaven made us take thought so that, both penitent and forgiving, we died at peace with God, Who overwhelms our hearts with the desire of beholding Him."

DANTE

"However much I gaze upon your faces I recognize no one of you; but if there is anything that I can do for you, spirits elect, say what it may be, and I will do it for the sake of that peace[1] which, following in the steps of such a guide, causes me to seek it from world to world."

Dante now converses with these souls. One of them says:

"Ah! So that the desire may be fulfilled which draws you to the high mountain, do you, with gentle pity, aid the fulfilment of my wish. I was of Montefeltro, and am Buonconte.[2] Joan,[3] nor any other,

[1] The peace which passeth understanding.

[2] Though born of the noble family of Montefeltro, like all men, he ceases after death to hold the titles of this world. He is now just Buonconte. He was a leader of the Emperor's forces at the battle of Campaldino, in 1289. The swollen waters pouring down from the Apennines took his body from the place where he had fallen in his flight, the confluence of the Archiano and the Arno, and carried it down stream.

[3] Buonconte's wife.

gives a thought to me. That is why I move among this throng with downcast countenance."

DANTE

"What violence, or what chance, caused you to stray so far from Campaldino that your burial place was never known?"

BUONCONTE

"The lower Casentino is crossed by a stream called the Archiano, which rises in the Apennines above the Hermitage. I reached the place where it loses its name,[2] stabbed through the throat, fleeing on foot, bloodying the plain. There sight failed me, and my words ended with the name of Mary. There I sank down, and my body remained alone. I will tell the truth, and do you report it among the living. The Angel of God took me, and one from Hell cried out:

" 'O you of Heaven, why do you rob me? You carry away the eternal part of him for one little tear[4] that snatches him from me. I will deal in a different way with the mortal part.'[5]

"You know how moist vapor, collecting in the air, turns to water when it rises to where the cold

[4] His last moment was repentant.
[5] His body.

condenses it. The angel from Hell joined his malicious will, which seeks only evil, to his intelligence, and stirred up the mist and the wind by the power which his nature gave him. Then, when the day was spent, he covered the valley with cloud, from Pratomagno to the great mountain chain, making the o'erhanging sky so heavy that the moisture-laden air turned to water. Down came the rain. What the earth could not absorb ran to the gullies. It gathered in torrents and rushed so swiftly toward the royal river that nothing could check it. The raging Archiano found my frozen body at its mouth and swept it into the Arno. It loosened the cross I had made with my arms upon my breast at the moment I yielded to the agony of death. It rolled me along its banks, and over its bed, and with its debris covered and entangled me."

This story, justly famous for the way in which the lonely death and unheeded memory of Buonconte is told—a tale of violent and solitary dying, and of a life at once forgotten by wife, and kin, and friend—is immediately followed by another, in which deep pathos and intense tragedy are implied rather than detailed, in one of the most vivid bits of impressionism ever painted in words. The shade of Pia, member of one of the great families of Siena, who was put to death by her husband, a lord of Maremma, says to Dante:

"And when you shall have returned to the world, and rested from your long journey, remember me, who am Pia. Siena made me. Maremma unmade me. He knows, who, first plighting troth, had wedded me with his ring."[6]

CANTO VI

The same scene as in Canto V. Dante and Virgil move forward, and Dante leaves the shades with the promise to carry back news of them to their friends, and so secure prayers for them. He likens his position to that of a winner in a game of chance, fawned on by the bystanders and anxious to get away.

When a game of hazard is over, he who loses remains behind, disconsolate, repeating the throws, and, disappointed, learns. The crowd follows the winner. One goes in front, and another catches at him from behind, and a third, at his side, makes himself known. The winner does not stop. He listens to one, and to another. The man to whom he gives something presses on him no longer, and

[6] A deal of womanly gentleness and considerate tenderness, and of a modesty that shrank even from asking prayers for her soul's easement, is compressed into Pia's sad story told "in a few simple sentences, but so clearly, and so tersely, that the passage has always been reputed one of those that demonstrate to the fullest extent Dante's marvelous power of condensed narrative."—Vernon.

so he protects himself from the crowd. Such was I in that dense throng, as I turned my face to them on every side, and, by giving promises, escaped.

Virgil discourses to Dante on the efficacy of prayer, closing his remarks with the words:

"I speak of Beatrice. You shall see her up above, smiling and happy, upon the summit of this mountain."

And I: "My Lord, let us advance with greater speed, for I am no longer weary as I was a while ago;[1] and see how the mountain casts its shadow."

"We will go forward so far as daylight allows," he answered; "but the fact is not as you imagine. Before you can be up there you will see him return that is at present hidden behind the hill so that now you do not intercept his rays. But see, yonder a soul, which, stationed all alone, is looking toward us; it will point out to us the quickest way."

We came near to it. O Lombard soul, with what lofty and disdainful mien did you bear yourself; and, in the movement of your eyes how grave and slow! It spoke not a word, but let us go on, eying

[1] The mere, but oh! how clever naming of Beatrice by Virgil, is more than enough to make Dante forget that he is tired. A world of human nature is implied by Dante's "I am no longer tired"; no less a world of human understanding; of wholly beautiful and highly humorous sympathy, is implied by Virgil's mention of Beatrice. The dialogue is fascinatingly real; a true love scene if ever there was one.

us like a couchant lion. None the less did Virgil approach closer, praying that it would show us the best ascent. It made no answer to his request, but asked us about our country, and our life. And my gentle guide began:

"Mantua"—and the shade, all absorbed in itself, rose toward him, exclaiming:

"O Mantuan, I am Sordello[2] of your city."

And they embraced each other.

CANTO VII

The incident of Virgil and Sordello is continued.

After dignified and joyous salutations had been thrice and four times repeated Sordello drew back, and said:

"Who are you?"

VIRGIL

"My bones had been buried by Octavian before ever souls, fit to ascend to God, were directed to this mountain.[1] I am Virgil, and for no other sin did I lose Heaven than that of not having faith."

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[2] Little is known of Sordello, save that Dante held him in high respect. The bond of being citizens of the same city, Mantua, and love of their common birthplace, causes the haughty, high-bred Sordello to come out of himself and welcome Virgil, who, as yet, he knows merely as a fellow-citizen.

[1] Virgil died A. D. 19, before Christ's crucifixion, and hence before the way to eternal life had been made plain to man.

Like one who suddenly sees something that astonishes him, which at the same instant causes him to believe and disbelieve, exclaiming: "It is, it is not," —such seemed Sordello's shade. Then he bowed his head, and came humbly toward my guide, and embraced him where an inferior embraces.[2]

SORDELLO

"O Glory of the Latins, by whom our language was made to show what it could do; O Eternal Honor of the place where I was born, what merit or what grace reveals you to me? If I am worthy to be spoken to, tell me if you come from Hell, and from what circle."

VIRGIL

"Through all the circles of the realm of woe came I here. The power of Heaven moved me by its authority, and I came. Not for what I did, but for what I did not do, have I lost the vision of the high Sun[3] for which you long, and about which I learned too late.[4] There is a place in the underworld, sad, not with torments but only with gloom, where sighs have not the sound of wailing, but of lamentation. In that place I abide with the little innocents whom death stung before they had been

[2] Below the knees.
[3] God.
[4] Virgil did not know about Christ until after his own death.

cleansed of mortal sin.[5] In that place I dwell with those who were not clothed with the three holy virtues,[6] but without fault of any kind knew the others, and practised all of them.[7] But if you know, and can, point out to us the way whereby we may more quickly reach the place where Purgatory has its real beginning."

SORDELLO

"No fixed place is assigned to us. I am free to go up and round about. For so far as I am permitted I will guide you. But note already how the day declines. To ascend by night is impossible; hence it is well to find a pleasant resting place. Yonder, to the right, apart from the others, is a company of souls. With your consent I will lead you to them, and not without delight will they be known to you."

VIRGIL

"How is it? Would he who wished to ascend at night be prevented by others, or could he not go up for lack of power?"

And the good Sordello drew his finger on the ground, saying:

"Look! you could not even cross this line after

[5] Before they were baptized.
[6] The Christian virtues, Faith, Hope and Charity.
[7] The Cardinal virtues, Temperance, Fortitude, Justice and Prudence.

the sun is gone; not however that anything save the darkness of the night would hinder. It hinders the will with impotence.[8] One might turn downward in the darkness and roam about the mountain so long as day remains below the horizon."

Thereon my lord, as though in wonder, said:

"Lead us there where you say we may have delight while waiting."

Short distance had we gone when I discovered that the mountain side was hollowed out, as on Earth the valleys are.

SORDELLO

"Over there where the hill side forms a lap, we will go, and there we will await the morrow."

In places, steep, in others, level, a winding path led us along the edge of the valley to where its border more than half dies away. Gold and fine silver, scarlet and pearl, white, blue of indigo, new emerald at the moment it is split, would each be outshone by the herbage and the flowers of that valley, as the less is exceeded by the greater. Not only had Nature given color there, but of a thousand scents she had made one unknown and blended fragrance.

Here, seated upon the green, and among flowers, I saw souls, because of the depression, not visible

[8] This is allegory. It means that the soul can ascend Purgatory, the mountain of purification, only when illumined by the Sun of Grace.

from without. They were singing, "Salve Regina."[9]

Sordello points out, and names, some of these souls,[10] beginning:

"He who sits highest and has the look of having left undone that which he should have done, and does not join in singing with the others, was Rudolph the Emperor, who might have healed the wounds that have slain Italy."[11]

CANTO VIII

Valley of princes.

It was the hour that makes sailors long for home and softens their hearts, the day when they have bade farewell to their dear friends, the hour that fills, with love, him who has just set out upon a journey, if from afar he hears the bell which seems to mourn the dying day.[1] I began to lose

[9] A beautiful hymn appointed to be sung at certain seasons just before nightfall, and peculiarly appropriate to these souls in exile, as it were. "Hail, Queen, Mother of Mercy! To thee, we exiled Sons of Eve, do cry—come then, our Advocate, when the exile is o'er, and show us Jesus."

[10] These souls are those of kings and princes who did not repent until the end because of the weight of the cares of state.

[11] Rudolph of Hapsburg, crowned in 1273.

[1] Byron imitated this beautiful description of the effect of twilight in bringing thoughts of home to the mariner and pilgrim. *Don Juan,* III.

consciousness of what was being said, and to look, with wonder, at one of the shades, who, uprisen, claimed attention with his hand. It joined and lifted both its palms, fixing its eyes upon the East, as though it were saying to God, "For aught else I care not." *"Te lucis ante"*[2] came so devoutly from its lips, and in tones so sweet, that it took me out of my very self. And then the others, sweetly and reverently accompanied it through the entire hymn to the end, keeping their gaze upon the heavenly spheres. Here, Reader, open wide your eyes to the truth, for truly the veil[3] is now so slight that it is easy to pass within.

Thereupon I saw that noble company all silently look upward, pale and meek, as if in expectation; and I saw two angels come forth and descend from on high, with two flaming swords, blunted and without points. Green[4] as leaves of spring was their raiment, which, beaten and blown by their green wings, they trailed behind them. One came and

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"Soft hour! which wakes the wish and melts the heart,
Of those who sail the seas, on the first day
When they from their sweet friends are torn apart;
Or fills with love the pilgrim on his way,
As the far bell of vesper makes him start
Seeming to weep the dying day's decay;"

[2] It is the Latin form of the much-loved evening hymn which begins: "Before the ending of the day."

[3] The allegory refers probably to the fact that these souls outside Purgatory are still subject to temptation, and must call upon God for help to resist. The serpent signifies temptation; the angels, God's help.

[4] Green is the color of hope.

stationed himself a little above us, and the other swept his way to the opposite bank so that all the inhabitants were guarded between them. I saw clearly that their heads were blond, but by their faces the eye was dazzled, as every sense is confounded by excess.

"Both of them come from the bosom of Mary," said Sordello, "to keep watch over the valley, because of the serpent that will straightway come." Hearing this, I, who knew not by what way, chilled through, turned and drew close to my trusted leader.

Sordello began again:

"Let us now go down among the mighty shades and speak with them; to see you will give them joy."

I think I took only three steps down. There below I noticed one who was looking hard at me alone, as if he thought to recognize me. It was already dusk, but not so dark that the little space between his eyes and mine did not allow to be seen what distance had before concealed. He drew very near to me, and I approached him. Noble Judge Nino! what delight it was to me when I saw that you were not among the damned! No kind greeting was left unsaid by us. Then he asked:

"How long is it since you arrived at the foot of the mountain from beyond the wide waters?"

"Oh," replied I to him, "I came this morning

from the realms of woe and am still in the mortal life although by making this journey I hope to gain the immortal."

And when they had heard my reply, Sordello and he drew themselves back like people suddenly bewildered.[5] One of them turned to Virgil, and the other to a shade seated close by, crying:

"Up, Corrado, come and see what God through grace has willed."

Then turning to me:

Nino

"By that exceptional gratitude which you owe Him who so hides His prime motive that no human being can fathom it, when you shall again be on the far side of the wide sea, tell my Joan[6] to make intercession for me there where answer is made to the innocent. I do not think her mother any longer loves me since she has changed her white weeds, which she, miserable creature, must even now wish back. Through her one may easily understand how long the fire of love lasts in a woman if sight and touch do not often feed its flame."

My eyes meantime I kept bent wholly upon the

[5] Because heretofore Sordello, absorbed in talk with Virgil, had not perceived that Dante was a living, breathing man.

[6] Judge Nino's daughter.

heavens; only on that part where the stars are slowest,[7] just as a wheel is, nearest the axle.

VIRGIL

"My son, what look you at so fixedly up there?"

DANTE

"At those three torches[8] with which the pole on this side blazes."

VIRGIL

"The four bright stars[9] which you saw this morning have sunk low down upon the other side and these have risen in their place."

While Virgil was still speaking Sordello drew him to himself, exclaiming:

"See, there's our adversary!" and pointed with his finger to look that way. On the side where the little valley had no defense was a serpent, such an one perhaps as offered Eve the bitter fruit. Through grass and flowers came the evil thing, now and again turning its head backward, licking like a beast

[7] The South Pole.
[8] The three bright stars which symbolize Faith, Hope and Charity which Dante sees looking to the Pole from the south side of the Equator.
[9] Justice, Fortitude, Prudence and Temperance.

that strokes its coat. I did not see, and therefore can not tell how the celestial falcons moved, but I distinctly saw both of them in motion. Hearing their green pinions cleave the air, the serpent fled, and the angels wheeled upward to their posts with equal flight.

CANTO IX

The gate of Purgatory. With this canto Dante concludes his account of Ante-Purgatory and the condition of the waiting souls not yet admitted to Purgatory proper. From this point to the close of Canto XXVII, the poem treats of the sufferings and purgation of the souls of those who gave way to any of the seven mortal sins, Pride, Envy, Anger, Sloth, Avarice, Gluttony and Lust. The time is about two and a half hours after sundown.

The concubine of old Tithonus[1] rising from the arms of her fond lover was already gleaming silvery on the balcony of the east. Her brow was glistening with stars set in the shape of the cold-blooded creature[2] that stings people with its tail. And in the place where we were, Night had taken two of the steps[3] by which she ascends, and for the

[1] Aurora, the true wife of Tithonus, as preceding sunrise, and the lunar Aurora, his concubine, the light which precedes moonrise.

[2] The sign of the Scorpion was on the horizon.

[3] The steps are the first six hours of the night, from six p. m. midnight.

third, the wings were already bending down; when I, who still had something of Adam[4] in me, overcome by sleep, fell back upon the grass there where all five of us[5] were seated.

At the hour near day-break when the little swallow begins her plaintive lays,[6] recollecting mayhap her former woes, and when mortal mind, more free of the flesh and less subject to thought, is almost prophetic in its visions, in dream I saw an eagle with golden feathers, poised in mid-air, with wings outspread, ready to swoop. I seemed to be there,[7] where Ganymede was abandoned by his companions when he was snatched aloft to Olympus. Then it seemed to me that circling a little, terrible as a thunderbolt he swooped down, and caught me upward as high as the fire.[8] Then he and I seemed to burn, and the imagined flame scorched so, that of necessity my sleep was broken. As slumber fled I started up, pale, like a man frozen with fear. Beside me was my comforter only, and the sun was more than two hours high,[9] and my face was toward the sea.

"Have no fear," said my lord: "be reassured, for

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[4] Human nature needing rest.
[5] Dante, Virgil, Sordello, Nino and Corrado.
[6] An allusion to the tragic story of the transforming of Progne into a swallow, and Philomela into a nightingale.
[7] Mount Ida, from which Ganymede was snatched by an eagle and carried to Olympus to be the Gods' cupbearer.
[8] The sphere of fire.
[9] The morning of Easter Monday.

we are at a good point. Hold not back, but put forth all your might. You are now arrived at Purgatory; see yonder the rampart that hems it in; see yonder the entrance, there where it appears divided. Short time since, in the dawn that precedes the day, when you were asleep, and lying upon the flowers which deck the valley down below, a lady came, and said: 'I am Lucia; let me take up this one who is sleeping; thus will I speed him on his way.' Sordello and the other noble shades remained. She lifted you up, and, so soon as the day brightened, she mounted, and I in her footsteps. Here she put you down. First her lovely eyes directed me to that rift; then she and sleep went away together."

As a man in doubt, on being reassured, changes fear for confidence, when the truth is made plain to him, so I changed. And when my guide saw that I was no longer anxious, he began to go up along the cliff, and I behind him, toward the height. We drew near and came to a place where, instead of a rift in the wall, I beheld a gate, and below, leading up to it, three steps of divers colors, and a gatekeeper who as yet spoke not a word. And as I fixed my eye more and more upon him, I discovered that he was sitting on the upper step, and that I could not look him in the face. In his hand he held a naked sword which shot back the rays so dazzlingly that again and again I lifted my eyes in vain.

"Speak from where you are: What is it that you

wish?" he began. "Where is your guide? Give heed lest your going up work you harm."

"A lady from Heaven, well versed in these things," replied my master, "only just now said to us: 'Go thither, there is the gate.'"

"And may she speed your steps to a good end," again began the courteous keeper: "Come forward unto our stairs."

And so we went to the first great stair. It was of white marble, so smooth and polished that in it I saw myself reflected perfectly. The second was dark purple gray, a rough and scorched stone cracked lengthwise and across. The third, massive and uppermost, appeared to me to be of porphyry as flaming red as blood that spurts from a vein. On this the Angel of God had both his feet, sitting upon the threshold which seemed to me to be of adamant. Up the three steps my guide led me with good will, saying:

"Beseech him humbly to undo the lock."

Devoutly did I cast myself at the holy feet; I besought him for mercy's sake to open; but first I struck three times upon my breast.[10]

With the point of his sword he inscribed Seven P's[11] upon my forehead, then said:

[10] To signify his penitence for sins of thought, word and deed.

[11] They stand for the seven mortal sins.

"See to it that you wash away these scars when you are inside."

Ashes, or dry earth, are of the same color as his raiment, from beneath which he drew forth two keys. One was gold and the other silver.[12] First with the white, and then with the yellow, he did to the gate what I desired.

"Whenever one of these keys fails, so that it does not turn rightly in the lock," he said to us, "this narrow entrance will not open. The one is more precious, but the other requires surpassing skill and wisdom before it unlocks, because it is that which must untangle the knot.[13] From Peter I had them; and he told me to err rather in opening than in keeping shut, provided only the people humble themselves at my feet." Thereon he pushed open the door of the sacred portal, saying:

"Enter in, but I warn you that he who looks back must go out again."

And when the pivots, metal, strong and resonant, of that sacred door turned in their sockets, Tarpeia roared not so loud nor made so harsh a sound when the good Metellus was taken from her, whereby she afterward was impoverished.[14]

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[12] The gold key typifies power to open; the silver, judgment as to whom to open for.

[13] The question of a soul's fitness to enter.

[14] The Tarpeian rock is here used to signify the Capitoline Hill. The tribune Metellus unsuccessfully defended the temple of Saturn, the public treasury, against Cæsar, and the Tarpeian

I turned aside to listen to the first sound within and it seemed to me that I heard the words: *Te Deum laudamus,*[15] set to sweet harmony. What I heard gave me the same impression that we are accustomed to receive when people are chanting with an organ, inasmuch as at one moment the words are distinguishable, at another, not.

CANTOS X TO XXVIII

Purgatory proper. The first ledge of Purgatory, to which Dante and Virgil climb by a precipitous and narrow passage. They find this terrace:

more lonely than paths through deserts;

and that, in width, it

would measure thrice the length of a human body.[1]

Before they have begun to walk along it Dante discovers that the wall which rises to the next ledge,

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rock, close by, is said to have echoed the creaking when the doors were torn open.

[15] "We praise thee, O God," is the song of welcome and rejoicing which here celebrates every new arrival, and signifies the joy felt over every single sinner that repenteth.

[1] About eighteen feet wide. This is a striking example of Dante's use of precise and understandable detail by which he again and again bestows the quality of what is real upon the thing that he imagines.

really the face of the second step of the mountain, is:

of white marble, adorned with such sculptures that not only Polycletus,[2] but Nature herself, would have been put to shame thereby.

These bas-reliefs depict famous instances of humility, drawn, turn by turn, from Biblical and classical sources. The accuracy and affection with which Dante describes them, and the way in which he convinces the reader of the tremendous influence of these stories of humility upon souls in the act of purging themselves from the sin of pride are notable among the mighty as well as the lovely attributes of *The Comedy*.

"The Angel who came to Earth with the tidings of that peace so many years wept for, which opened Heaven from its long interdict,[3] appeared before us, carved with a sweet attitude, so true to life that he did not seem a dumb show. One would have sworn that he was saying: 'Hail!'[4] for she too was imaged there who turned the key to open Divine Love. And her action expressed the words, 'Behold the handmaiden of the Lord,' as exactly as a seal is stamped on wax."

[2] A famous Greek sculptor.

[3] It meant that with the coming of Christ salvation was to be again possible for mankind as it had been before the Fall.

[4] "Hail Mary, full of Grace, the Lord is with thee."

" 'Do not fix your attention upon one spot only,' " said my gentle master. At this I moved my eyes and saw, next beyond Mary, another story sculptured in the rock, and this was to the right, where my guide stood. Therefore I passed Virgil, and drew near so that it might be directly before me. There on the marble were carved the cart and the oxen drawing the sacred ark, because of which men fear an office not entrusted to them.[5]

"In front moved seven bands,[6] from whence
Confusion fell on me, my sense
A double answer bringing,
'They are, they are not singing.'
The incense steam with like surprise
Bewildered both my nose and eyes,
Discordant message sending.
For Aye and No contending."[7]

In front of the blessed vessel went the humble Psalmist, girt up and dancing. He was both more and less than a king on that occasion.[8] Opposite, portrayed at the window of a great palace, Michal[9] was gazing in amazement, with the manner of a lady scornful and disturbed.

I moved on in order to examine closely another story which, beyond Michal, shone glittering white. Here was chronicled the exalted glory of the Roman

[5] See 2 Samuel, vi:4-7.
[6] Of people.
[7] Shadwell's translation.
[8] More than a king because a priest, and less than a king because he humbled himself by dancing without his royal vestments.
[9] The daughter of Saul. For this story see 2 Samuel vi:12-16.

prince whose great worth moved Gregory to his tremendous victory.[10] I speak of the Emperor Trajan; and a poor woman was at his bridle, shown weeping and in grief. Round about him it seemed trampled and thronged with knights, and above him the golden eagles seemed moving in the wind. The woman among all these appeared to be saying: "My Lord, avenge me for my son who is dead, whereat I am broken-hearted." And he to answer her: "Wait until I return." And she like one in whom grief is impatient: "But, my Lord, if you do not return?" And he: "He who shall be in my place will do it for you." And she: "What will another's good deed profit you, if you forget your own?" Whereon he: "Be comforted, for I must do my duty ere I go: justice demands it, and pity holds me back."

While Dante is absorbed in looking at these sculptured stories, Virgil calls his attention to a group of shades advancing. These are the spirits of the Proud, moving slowly because of heavy weights which they were carrying on their backs. Bent almost double, in contrast to the lofty bearing they had maintained on Earth they seem scarcely to be men.

[10] The legend referred to is that which records how Pope Gregory the Great, because of Trajan's justice and clemency, besought God to take the Emperor's shade out of Hell. That God acceded to this prayer was Gregory's victory.

CANTO XI

The canto opens with a paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer, which the shades of the Proud are reciting. It closes with the petition:

"Our strength, which is easily overcome, put not to proof with the old adversary, but deliver us from him who so assails it.

"This last prayer, dear Lord, is not indeed made for ourselves, for it is not needed, but for those who have remained behind."[1]

Virgil says to the shades:

"So may justice and mercy soon lighten you of your burdens that, in accord with your desire, you may have power to move the wing that shall bear you on high, show us on which side the shortest path to the stairway lies; and if there is more than one passage, point out to us that which is least steep; for he who goes with me, because still burdened with the flesh of Adam, is chary, against his will, of climbing."

It was impossible to see from which one of them the answer came,[2] but it was:

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[1] In Purgatory the Devil has no power to tempt. They pray for those in Ante-Purgatory, and the living upon Earth. It must constantly be borne in mind that Dante recognized Pride as his own besetting sin. Wherever he meets with it he is specially affected.

[2] Because their faces were so bowed down.

"Come with us to the right hand along the bank and you will find the passage by which it is possible for a living person to ascend."

The shade who has just spoken then goes on to tell Dante who he was, one Omberto, "son of a great Tuscan," and immediately afterward, realizing that he had been guilty of pride in this mention of his father, asks Dante if he had ever heard of his father as an act of humility. Another shade now makes himself known.

Listening, I bent down my face; and one of them, not he who had been speaking, managed to twist round under the weight that hampered him, and saw me, and recognized me, and called out, keeping his eyes with difficulty fixed on me, who, bent over, was going along with them.

"Oh," said I to him, "are you not Oderisi,[3] the honor of Gubbio, and of that art which in Paris is called illuminating?"

"Brother," said he, "the leaves which Franco of

[3] This is an exceedingly interesting passage, being, as it is, an expression of the attitude of Dante and his age toward the then reviving art of painting. Oderisi was a famous miniaturist who worked at Bologna and Rome. He took pride in his own skill as a painter, and here in Purgatory he shows his penitence by owning to his rival's, Franco's superiority. The passage, ending as it does with Giotto, is true to the fact, namely, that Italian painting was at this time making rapid advance toward the perfection with which it crowned itself during the Renaissance. The general idea of this passage and the subsequent history of painting are embodied perfectly in Ruskin's saying that in art Giotto uttered burning words of prophecy with the stammering lips of infancy.

Bologna paints are fairer to look upon; the honor now is all his, and mine only in part. Truly I should not have been so generous while I lived, because of the overwhelming wish to excel, on which my heart was set. For such pride the penalty is paid here; and moreover I should not be here, were it not that while I still was free to sin, I turned to God. Oh, vain-glory of human powers, how little while does your reputation last at its height, if it is not followed by an inferior generation! Cimabue thought to hold the field in painting, and now Giotto gets the applause, so that the other's fame is eclipsed. In like manner one Guido[4] has wrested from the other the glory of our language, and mayhap one is already born who shall supplant them both. Worldly fame is naught but a gust of wind, which blows now this way, now that, and changes name as it shifts quarter. Will your reputation be mightier a thousand years hence, if you leave your flesh in old age, than if you had died before putting away childish things; in a thousand years, which to eternity is a shorter span than the twinkling of an eye? Your fame is as the color of the grass, that comes and goes; the very heat that brought it forth from the earth withers it."

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[4] Two poets of the age, one of whom outdid the other, even as Giotto outdid Cimabue. The third poet referred to is Dante, which reference is itself, of course, an act of pride and quite in keeping with what Dante evidently regarded as his own besetting sin.

And I to him: "The truth of your words breeds blessed humility in my heart and lessens my swollen pride."

CANTO XII

Virgil bids Dante leave the shade with whom he is conversing and make greater haste.

I straightened up once more as is necessary for walking, although my thoughts remained bowed down and humble.

VIRGIL

"Turn your eyes downward; it will be well for you, in order to beguile the way, to examine the pavement beneath your feet."

This proves to be inlaid and carved with notable stories of humility, which in their scheme, purpose and surpassing lifelikeness—the work of God exceeding that of the greatest human genius is the idea—are counterparts of the bas-reliefs on the wall which Dante looked at in Canto X.

On one side I saw him[1] who was created more noble than any other creature, falling like lightning

[1] Satan. "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from Heaven." St. Luke x:18.

from Heaven. On the other I saw Briareus[2] struck by a bolt lying in the chill of death, a dead weight on the ground.

I saw Nimrod at the foot of his great undertaking[3] as though bewildered, and looking at the people who had been proud with him in Shinar.

I saw Troy in ashes and in ruins; O Ilion, how cast down and abject did that carving make you appear!

Dante, after a long enumeration of similar scenes, comments upon their wonderful perfection as works of art.

What master of the brush, or of the sculptor's tool, could reproduce the shadows and the lines which here would dumfound the greatest genius. Dead seemed the dead, and the living seemed alive. Whoever beheld the actual events saw them not more clearly than I, on so much of the pavement as I went over, bent down to look. Now give rein to your pride, and go your way with haughty bearing, you sons of Eve, and turn your eyes not downward so as to see your evil path!

Suddenly Virgil says:

"Lift up your face; there is no more time for

[2] One of the giants who, according to the legend, attempted to usurp the power of Jupiter, a classical counterpart of the Biblical story of Lucifer.

[3] The tower of Babel. Gen. xi:4.

such abstraction. See yonder an angel who is making ready to come toward us. See how the sixth hand maiden of the day is returning.[4] With reverence adorn your acts and face so that it may please him to direct us upward. Remember that this day never dawns again."

The beautiful creature came toward us, clothed in white, and on his countenance a light such as that of the tremulous morning star. He opened his arms and spread his wings, and said:

"Come: the stairway[5] is close at hand; from now on the going up is easy. Few indeed are they who hear these tidings. O human race, born to fly upward, why do you fall before such slight gusts of wind?"[6]

He led us to where the rock was cleft; then brushed my forehead with his wings;[7] then promised me safe passage.

As Dante and Virgil turn to this opening, which proved to be narrow and steep, but less so than the one lower down, they heard voices chanting:

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[4] It is close upon noon, six hours of the day having passed.

[5] The way of ascent to the next terrace.

[6] The slightest breath of the wind of temptation, in this case a gust of pride.

[7] By this operation one of the P's is removed; symbolically he is now cleansed from the first of the seven deadly sins, namely, Pride. This same method is used to remove the other six—the method really applied to penitent souls in their progress through Purgatory, and to Dante, in appearance only, so that he may learn what the system of purgation is like.

"Blessed are the meek in spirit" with such sweetness as can not be portrayed by words. Ah me! how unlike are the approaches here to those of Hell; for here one enters with songs, and there with angry wailings.

Already we were going up the holy stairs, and it seemed to me that I was lighter far than I had felt myself even upon the plain, because of which I said:

"Master, tell me, what heavy thing has been lifted from me, so that I feel almost no fatigue as I go forward?"

VIRGIL

"When the P's which remain now faintly marked[8] upon your brow shall all be as one is, wholly erased, your feet will be so driven by good will that not only shall they feel no fatigue, but it shall be a delight to them to press upward."

Then I did like those who have something on their head of which they are unaware, unless the signs[9] made by others arouse their suspicions; because of which the hand is used to learn the truth, and by feeling about finds out what it is, and so does what the eye can not do. With the fingers of my right hand spread wide I found only six of the letters which he who held the keys had stamped upon my temples; seeing which my leader smiled.

[8] Erasing the P, or sin of Pride, has made the other six P's faint, for Pride, the first root of sin, being removed, the others tend to vanish.

[9] Staring, pointing or laughter.

CANTOS XIII TO XV

CANTO XIII

The second terrace, where the sin of Envy is purged away. Coming out upon this ledge Dante remarks it to be of less size than that of the Proud.

No figure is there, nor imagery; thus the terrace wall appears bare, and thus the floor with only the livid hue[1] of the stone.

No shades are to be seen and Virgil prays to the Sun, always the symbol of God's illuminating grace, for guidance.

We had gone on, because of our willingness, in short time, as far as on Earth is counted for a mile, when toward us we heard flying, but did not see, spirits uttering kindly invitations to the table of love. The first voice which passed proclaimed loudly:

"They have no wine."[2]

And before it had gone entirely out of hearing distance another passed by, crying:

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[1] The symbolic color of Envy.

[2] John ii:3. The words of Mary at the marriage in Cana. and put into the angel's mouth here because suggestive of thoughtful care for others, the very opposite of what envy produces.

"I am Orestes,"[3] and it also did not stay.

"O Father," said I, "what voices are these?" and even as I was asking, lo! the third, saying:

"Love them from whom you have had evil."

VIRGIL

"This circle scourges the sin of Envy, and therefore the lashes of the scourge are drawn from love. The curb[4] must be of a different sound; I think, relying on my own judgment, that you will hear it before you reach the gate of pardon.[5] But let your eyes search steadfastly through the air, and you will see people sitting in front of us, each against the cliff."

Thereupon I opened my eyes wider than before, and, looking in front of me, saw shades clad in cloaks colored not unlike the stone. One was supporting the other with his shoulder, and all were leaning against the cliff. As the sun does not profit the blind, so to the shades in that place the light of Heaven wills not to be liberal of itself, for an iron wire pierces the eyelids of them all. It seemed to me that I was committing an outrage walking about,

[3] The words of Pylades, when he represented himself as Orestes in order to be put to death in his stead. A classical instance of one willing "to lay down his life for his friends."

[4] Curb, here, means harsh words intended to be a deterrent from sin.

[5] The stairway or passage of ascent to the next ledge, not taken until the P of Envy has been erased.

looking at others, myself unseen.[6] Their tears were so pressed out that their cheeks were wet. I turned to them and said:

"O folk assured of beholding the Light on high, which is the sole object of your desire, may grace speedily dissolve the scum upon your consciences so that memory shall flow through them in clear stream,[7] tell me, for it will be precious and acceptable to me, if there is any Italian shade among you here. Perchance, too, it will work good for him if I learn it."

The shade of Sapia, a Sienese lady of rank, answers:

"Each of us is a citizen of one true city, but you mean one who dwelt in Italy while he was a pilgrim.[8] I was more joyful over other's harm than my own good fortune."

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[6] It would be hard to find among the many things which Dante, as it were, lets drop concerning kindness, considerateness for others, in a word, courtesy, a comment more characteristic than this; comment more thoroughly descriptive of his own ideal of what a gentleman should be—one who would never out of idle curiosity stare into the closed eyes of a blind man, at a cripple, or into the face of a corpse.

[7] As a stream cleansed of all impurities, such memory becomes, after a shade has undergone the cleansing torments of Purgatory.

[8] Psalm cxix:54. "Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage." Heb. xi:13, "strangers and pilgrims on the earth." The same, v. 16 (God), "hath prepared for them a city." Also, see Ephesians, ii:19, and Heb. xiii:14.

To prove which Sapia goes on:

"When I was past middle age, my fellow citizens had joined battle with their enemies near Colle,[9] and I prayed God for that which He willed. They[10] were routed and turned to the bitter difficulties of retreat; and I, watching the pursuit, experienced a joy unequaled by any other, crying out to God, 'Henceforth I do not fear Thee.' In my last hour I sought peace with Him, and even yet my debt would not have been lessened by penitence, had not Pier Pettinagno, who in charity was sorry for me, remembered me in his holy prayers."[11]

CANTO XIV

Here, with other shades doing penance for their sins of Envy, Dante meets Guido del Duca, of whose history little or nothing is known, but of whose character in one terse line Dante has drawn a consummate portrait of envy at its worst. It is one of those portraits which are unforgettable.

"I am Guido del Duca. My blood was so consumed by envy that had I seen a man becoming

[9] A fortress near Siena. The battle was in 1269.

[10] The Sienese, her own countrymen of whom she was envious and over whose misfortune she rejoiced.

[11] This man was of the humblest tradesmen, a maker of combs, whose honesty of word and deed got him a great reputation. Sapia at one time gave him alms and for that he remembered her.

happy, you would have seen me covered with the hue of spite. I reap that which I sowed. O human race! why set you your heart on those things which exclude friendship."[1]

When Dante has done talking with the shades in this group, and he and Virgil are once more alone, the invisible voices of the air again speed past them, saying:

"Every one that findeth me shall slay me,"[2] and rolled away like thunder when a storm-cloud is suddenly rent. Soon as it had gone beyond our hearing, another with so tremendous a clap that it was like the thunder which comes in the same instant as the lightning: "I am Aglauros who was turned into a stone."[3] At this, in order to be close to the poet, I took a step backward instead of forward. The air, now grown still on every side, he said to me:

"That was the harsh curb[4] which ought to keep a man within bounds. But you mortals swallow the bait, so that the hook of the old adversary drags you to him, and for this reason neither restraint

[1] Longfellow translates this question and exclamation:

"O human race! why dost thou set thy heart
Where interdict of partnership must be?"

[2] Gen. iv:14.

[3] Aglauros, envious of Hermes for falling in love with his sister, Herse, was changed into a stone.

[4] See Note 4, Canto XIII.

nor summons avail. Heaven calls you, and revolves around you, displaying its eternal beauties to you, and yet your eye looks only on the ground. This is why He who sees all things scourges you."

CANTO XV

The poets are approaching the ascent to the third terrace, and the sun is near its setting. Dante, dazzled by the light, is convinced that it is more intense than usual. Holding his hands to his eyes he can not shut it out. He says:

"What is that, dear father, from which I can not screen my eyes so that I can see, and which seems to be moving toward us?"

"Be not surprised if the inhabitants of Heaven still dazzle you," he replied. "It is a messenger that comes to invite us to go up. It will soon be so that your eyes will have no difficulty in gazing at such sights, but you will find it a delight as great as Nature has made you capable of experiencing."

So soon as we had come near to the blessed Angel, with joyful voice, he said:

"Enter here upon a stairway much less steep than the others."

We had begun to mount, having left the place where we were,[1] when we heard sung behind us,

[1] The terrace of the Envious.

"Blessed are the merciful," and "Rejoice thou that overcomest."

As they are climbing the stairs to the third terrace Dante says to Virgil:

"What did the shade mean in speaking of the exclusion of friendship?"[2]

Wherefore he to me: "Because your aspirations are directed to those things[3] which through sharing are lessened, Envy moves the bellows for your sighs.[4] But if the love of highest Heaven turned your desires upward, that fear[5] would not be in your breast; for the more there are up there who say, 'Ours,' so much the more of good does each one possess, and so much the more of love burns in those mansions."[6]

"I am further from being satisfied," said I, "than if I had kept silent, and more doubt gathers in my

[2] Canto XIV, Note 1.

[3] The things of the world; money and goods.

[4] It means that envy furnishes the breath for sighs, which are the sign of the envy felt by one who has divided his possessions and hence no longer has the whole. Then follows a remarkable discourse on the sharing of good, and the making and preserving of friendship, which Bacon said doubled joy and cut sorrow in two.

[5] Of sharing.

[6] "Since good, the more
Communicated, the more abundant grows."
Milton, *Paradise Lost*, v. 73.

"True love in this differs from gold and clay
That to divide is not to take away."
Shelley.

The greater the number to enjoy the bliss of Heaven the greater is the sum of bliss to be enjoyed.

mind. How can it be that a good distributed makes more possessors richer than if it be owned by a few?"

And he to me: "Because you fix your mind only on earthly things, you gather darkness from light itself. That infinite and ineffable Good which is on high, runs to love as a sunbeam to a lucid body.[7] It gives itself as much as it finds zeal for the gift, so that in whatever measure love exists, the more does the Eternal Glory spread over it. And the more there are who fix their hearts on high, the more there are to exert love, and the more of love there is, and, like a mirror, one reflects it to the other. If my argument does not satisfy your craving, you shall see Beatrice, and she will completely answer this, and every other question that troubles you. Strive only that soon the five remaining P's be healed, by penitence, as two already are."

As I was on the point of saying: "You satisfy me," I saw that I had reached the next circle, so that my eager eyes made me keep quiet.[8] There it seemed to me that I was rapt in an ecstatic vision, and that I saw many people in a temple, and at the threshold a Lady, with the

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[7] The love of God is given to men in such degree as they have power to receive it, just as light makes objects bright in proportion as they can receive it into themselves and so become brilliant.

[8] His keenness for new sights kept him from spending further time in talk.

gentle manner of a mother, saying: "My son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." And as she ceased speaking the vision disappeared.

Then I beheld another lady, her cheeks wet with the tears which grief distils when it comes of deep resentment against others. She was saying: "If you are lord of the city[9] about whose name there was such contention among the gods, the city whence shines forth all wisdom, avenge yourself, O Pisistratus, on those bold arms which embraced our daughter."[10] And her lord appeared kind and gentle, and to answer her, with temperate look:

"What shall we do to those who wish us ill if we condemn those who love us?"

Next I saw people enflamed with the fire of anger, slaying a young man[11] with stones, and crying loudly to one another, "Kill! Kill!" And I saw him bowed down by death, which was already upon him, yet even in such straits his eyes continued to implore Heaven, praying to the Almighty Lord, with the look which begets compassion, that He would forgive his persecutors.

These three visions are, of course, introduced to

[9] Athens.

[10] A young man in love with the daughter of Pisistratus kissed her in public, whereat the mother of the girl begged her husband, Lord of Athens, to have the young man punished.

[11] St. Stephen. Acts vii:54 et seq.

display notable instances of forgiveness, the opposite virtue to the vice of anger, which this terrace punishes. The visions also provide the stage means, in the narrative, by which Dante is conveyed from the terrace of Envy to that of Anger.

We were moving on through the vesper time, peering forward into the face of the late and dazzling sunbeams as far as our eyes could reach, when of a sudden, little by little, a smoke, dark as night, came rolling toward us; nor was there any place of shelter. It blinded our eyes and choked us.

CANTOS XVI AND XVII

CANTO XVI

The third terrace. The darkness and bitterness of anger, of wrath in the heart of man, is here symbolized by dense smoke, the result of burning, literally; figuratively, the befogging and taking away of good understanding. Like anger, smoke is irritating to the senses.

Gloom of Hell, or of night unlit by a single star, beneath a poor sky, as darkened by clouds as possible, never made for my eyes so dense a veil, or one of such rough quality to feel, as the smoke which there enveloped us. In it one could not keep his

eyes open. Because of which my wise and faithful guide came close to my side and offered me his shoulder. Even as a blind man goes behind his escort, in order not to lose his way, or run into any thing which might hurt or kill him, so I went through that bitter and foul air, listening to my leader, who said only: "Take heed not to get separated from me."

I heard voices, and each of them seemed to be praying for peace and mercy to the Lamb of God that taketh away sins. "Lamb of God," was their only beginning. They kept perfect unison of word and measure, so that there was the appearance of entire agreement among them.[1]

"Master," said I, "are they spirits that I hear?" And he to me:

"You apprehend rightly, and they go loosening the knot of anger."

A conversation between Dante and one of the shades follows, and Dante asks the way, and the name of him who tells it.

"I was a Lombard, and was called Marco. I knew the world, and I loved that virtue, at which nowadays no one aims.[2] For mounting upward, you

[1] The opposite of that discord of words and tone where the angry are quarreling.

[2] Toward which at present every one has unbent his bow: no one aims at virtue with the bow of desire.

are holding the right course." This was his answer; then he added:

"I pray you, to pray for me, when you shall be on high."

DANTE

"I give you my word that I will do what you desire."

He then goes on to ask Marco the cause why the world is so full of vice, saying that one man ascribes it to the influence of the stars, and another to original sin. Marco then discourses on these matters in a wonderfully interesting and clear fashion; a discourse, really, on the freedom of the will—that corner-stone of Dante's faith and philosophy.

MARCO

"Brother, the world is blind, and truly you are of it. You on Earth ascribe every cause upward to the heavens[3] only, as if they of necessity governed all things. Were this so, free will would be destroyed in you, and there would be no justice in having joy for good, and grief for evil. The heavens do give the first impulse[4] to your actions, I do not say to all of them; but supposing I did say so, light has been given you to distinguish between right and wrong, and free will, which, though it may grow

[3] To the influence of the stars.
[4] At birth.

weary in its first resistance to the heavens, finally, if it is but nourished well, overcomes everything.[5] Though free to choose, you are subject to a greater power and to a better nature, and this is what creates in you the mind which the stars can not control. Therefore, if the present generation goes wrong, the cause is in you, and in you it must be sought. Of this I will now be a true expounder.

"Forth from the hand of Him who delights in it before even it exists, like a small maid that cries and laughs in baby play, issues the little soul, so simple that it knows nothing save that, proceeding from a glad Maker, it turns eagerly to whatever gives it pleasure. At first it tastes the savor of trivial good, and, deceived by this, runs after it, if guide or bridle do not check its inclination.[6] Hence it was necessary to establish law as a restraining curb; needful to have a king who should at least discern the tower of the true city.[7] The laws exist, but who administers them? No one. Wherefore easily may you perceive that evil government is the cause of the world's guilt, and not that nature is

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[5] As a man by right care and persistence may overcome the tendency to disease, say consumption, inherited or acquired, so might a man, by exercise of will, overcome the influences which the stars at birth exerted over him.

[6] The child at first attracted by trivial good, pursues it if no one shows it the difference between this and lasting good; in a word, the difference between the things which please the senses for the passing moment, and the things which are precious and lasting.

[7] The city of God, the tower or bulwark of which is justice.

corrupt in you.[8] Rome,[9] which made the world good, was used to have two Suns,[10] which lighted up both one road and the other; that of the world, and that of God. One has extinguished the other. The sword is joined to the crozier,[11] and being joined, both must of necessity go wrong, because one no longer fears the other. If you do not believe me, consider the fruit[12] for by it every plant is known.

"May God be with you! I bear you company no farther. Behold the brightness already glistening white through the smoke. I must depart—the Angel is there—before he sees me."[13]

So he turned back, and would no longer hear me.

CANTO XVII

The sun is setting as the poets come out of the smoke. Dante has another ecstatic dream in which he is shown instances of the results of anger. He is wakened by a light far brighter than that which the sun sheds on Earth.

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[8] Not original sin.

[9] Rome reformed the world by its law and order; its good government.

[10] Pope and Emperor, a spiritual and a temporal ruler.

[11] The crook, symbol of the Pope's shepherding of the faithful.

[12] The passage means, behold the result, the fearful condition into which Italy has now fallen.

[13] Marco's time is not yet up for the ledge of Wrath.

I was turning to see where I was, when a voice said: "Here is the ascent." And my master said: "This is a divine spirit who, unasked, is directing us how to go up, and in his own light hides himself. He deals with us as a man does with himself, for he who sees the need, and waits to be asked, is already preparing to refuse. Let us make our steps accord with such an invitation; let us hasten to ascend before it grows dark, for after that it would not be possible, until the day returns."

As soon as I was on the first step,[1] I felt the motion of a wing close by me, and a fanning on my face, and I heard:

"Blessed are the peacemakers, who are without sinful anger."

Already the fading light of the setting sun was so high above us[2] that the stars were twinkling all around us.

"O my strength, what is it makes you melt away?" I said to myself, for I felt that there was no power left in my legs. We were now at the top of the stair, and were motionless, like a ship when it has reached the shore. For a time I listened if I might hear anything in the new circle. Then I turned to my master, and said:

"Dear father, tell me what vice is purged on the

[1] Of the stairway to the next terrace.

[2] To be seen only where caught by the peak of the mountain as it rose high above them.

terrace where we now are. If our feet be stopped, let not your speech."

This is the ledge of the slothful. Virgil tells Dante that the mere love of what is good, passive love, is really sin—the sin of sloth; i. e., love, inactive, or, not pursuing its object with all its strength. He then goes on to show how love, or desire, is the seed of every good and evil act, performed by man.

"Neither Creator nor creature," he began, "was ever without love, either natural, or of the mind,[3] and this you know. The natural is always without error; but the other may err because of an evil object,[4] or from want of zeal, or too much zeal. While love is directed on the highest goods,[5] and with moderation upon others,[6] it can not be the cause of sinful pleasure. But when it is set on evil,[7] or pursues what is good with more zeal or less than it ought,[8] then against the Creator his own creature is working. Hence you may understand how love must be the seed of all your virtues, as well as of every action that deserves punishment."

[3] This love, or longing, is either inherent in the human being, as the longing or desire for food on the part of an infant, or it is a desire which results from the rational or reasoning faculty of the mind.
[4] As its aim.
[5] God, and the things of Heaven.
[6] The things of the world.
[7] Has desire for what is bad.
[8] Pursues spiritual good too little, or worldly good too much.

CANTO XVIII

The fourth terrace. Virgil continues to discourse on love and free will. He says to Dante:

"The mind, created prone to love, turns readily to anything that pleases it, so soon as pleasure rouses it to action. Your faculty of apprehension draws an image from a real object, and displays it within you, so that it makes the mind turn to it.[1] If, thus turned, the mind inclines toward the image, that inclination is love."

Dante is satisfied with this definition, but tells Virgil that he does not understand how, since in life objects for love are offered on all sides, and since the soul is endowed, at its creation, with a propensity for loving,—how, these conditions holding true, man deserves praise or blame for loving.

VIRGIL

"As far as reason is able to see I can explain to

[1] Of imagination Shakespeare says, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, v. 1,

"If it would but apprehend some joy
It comprehends some bringer of that joy."

Through the agency of the senses, an idea or image, based upon some reality of life, is presented to the mind. If the mind turns enthusiastically to this, the turning is love.

you. Beyond this you must look to Beatrice, for then it becomes a matter of faith.[2] The essence of man's nature,[3] which is distinct from matter, yet joined to it, has a certain inherent power which is not to be recognized unless it is in operation, nor shows itself save by its effect, as life in plants by green leaves. This is why man does not know whence his first instincts come, nor whence his first appetites, which are in him just as the instinct to make honey is in the bee, and this first choice can not merit praise or censure.[4] Now in order that with this first choice all others may be harmonized, you are given reason, and it should govern your decisions.[5] This is the ground of your deserts, according as you gather in and winnow good and evil desires. Those who in reasoning went to the bottom of this subject[6] took careful heed of this innate freedom of the will, and, as a result, they gave morals to the world. If we assume then, that every desire which you have comes of necessity, in you exists also the power to check it. This noble faculty Beatrice understands as free will, and therefore

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[2] A matter that transcends the highest reach of human reason and therefore not to be grasped or explained by Virgil.

[3] The form—essential part.

[4] See Canto XVII.

[5] Man is given the right to choose, freedom of the will, and reason, by which to decide what course, or thing, he will choose; hence his accountability for his choice, and for the acts, which represent his choice.

[6] Aristotle, Plato, and the ancient philosophers generally.

see that you bear it in mind if she begins to speak of it to you."[7]

For a time Dante grows drowsy, and then is recalled to his full senses by throngs of shades advancing and moving with great rapidity.

They were soon upon us because the whole vast crowd was moving at a run; and two in front cried out, weeping: "Mary ran in haste unto the hill country;[8] and Cæsar, to subdue Ilerda, whirled down upon Marseilles, and then darted away to Spain."[9]

"Haste! Haste! that you waste no time because of lukewarm love;" the others, following, cried: "So that zeal for right doing may again make grace green."[10]

Virgil asks them the way to the stairs leading to the next terrace, and one answers:

"Follow us and you will find the opening. We are so filled with the desire to move on that we can

[7] In Paradise, V. 19, et seq., Beatrice says: "The greatest gift which God in His generosity bestowed in creating, and that which most conforms to His own goodness, and that which He sets most store by, was the freedom of the will, with which the creatures that have intelligence, they all and they only were and are endowed."

[8] Luke i. 39.

[9] These instances of zeal are here recited by those whose sin has been sloth.

[10] Revive grace which through their negligence or sloth has withered.

not pause; but pardon us, if you should take what is our duty, to be a lack of courtesy."

When the shades have gone far ahead Dante again grows drowsy, and at last:

I closed my eyes in a reverie, and my meditation was changed into a dream.

CANTO XX

The fifth terrace. On it Dante finds Hugh Capet, who talks about the avarice of his descendants.

We had already departed from him and were striving to cover as much ground as our strength would allow, when I felt the mountain tremble, like a thing that is falling, at which such a chill came over me as comes to him who is going to his death. Surely Delos did not shake so violently before Latona made her nest in it to give birth to the twin eyes of Heaven.[1] Then from all sides rose up so loud a cry that my master drew nearer to me, saying: "Have no fear so long as I guide you."

"Glory to God in the highest,"[2] all were saying, so far as I could make out from those near enough for me to distinguish their words. We stood still, and in suspense, like the shepherds who first heard

[1] Apollo and Diana, the Sun and the Moon.
[2] And on earth peace, good will toward men. Luke ii. 14.

that song, until the trembling ceased, and the hymn was done. Then we resumed our sacred journey, looking at the shades lying on the ground, now returned to their accustomed lament. Never, if my memory errs not, did ignorance of any subject make me so keen to know as I became when I began to think about this thing. Nor, because of our haste, did I dare ask; nor, of myself, could I discover anything, so I went on, timid and thoughtful.

CANTO XXI

The poets are now met by a shade who says: "My brothers, may God give you peace."

VIRGIL

"Tell us, if you know, why just now the mountain shook so, and why, down to its sea-girt foot, all the souls in unison gave forth a shout."

SHADE

"The sacred rule[1] of the mountain can experience nothing which is contrary to its regulations, or which is beyond the customary. This place is free from every change. That only which went forth from Heaven, does Heaven receive into itself again.[2]

[1] Government.
[2] The soul.

Nothing else could cause the trembling. And this is why neither rain, nor hail, nor snow, nor dew, nor frost, are seen higher up than the three steps;[3] neither heavy clouds or light, nor lightning, nor the daughter of Thaumas[4] who, yonder upon Earth, often changes quarter. No wind blows higher up than the three steps just spoken of, on which the vicar of Peter sets his feet. It may perhaps tremble, more or less, lower down; but it never shakes up here because of the wind that is hidden in the Earth,[5] I know not how. In this place it trembles when a soul feels itself to be pure, so that it rises, or moves to ascend on high;[6] and this shout goes with it. I who have lain in this woe five hundred years and more, only just now felt a free volition for a better seat. This is why you felt the mountain quake, and heard its pious spirits render praise unto the Lord."

Virgil now asks the shade who he is.

SHADE

"At the time when the good Titus, with the aid of the Most High King, avenged[7] the wounds from

[3] The gate of Purgatory.
[4] Iris, the rainbow.
[5] It was commonly believed that the wind, hidden inside the Earth, caused earthquakes.
[6] When a soul has had the seven P's removed, the seven sins washed away, then, free, and of its own accord, it rises, and all Purgatory shouts for joy—singing, "We praise thee, O God," and the rest of the *Te Deum*.
[7] The destruction of Jerusalem by the Emperor Titus.

which gushed forth the blood sold by Judas, I was famous upon Earth with the name[8] that lasts longest, and bestows most honor, but not as yet, through faith, become a Christian. So sweet was my genius for song that Rome drew me to herself, although I was a native of Toulouse,[9] and there I was deemed worthy to have my brows crowned with myrtle. In the world men yet call me Statius. I sang of Thebes, and then of the great Achilles, but I sank[10] by the way with my second labor. The origins of my flame were the sparks from that divine fire, whereat more than a thousand poets have been kindled. I refer to the *Æneid,* which in poetry was mother and nurse to me. Without it I should not have balanced a drachm's weight in the scale; and to have lived yonder, when Virgil was alive, I would consent to one year more of penance than I need to be set free from banishment."[11]

These words made Virgil turn to me with a look which said silently: "Be silent!" but our wills can not accomplish everything; for laughter and tears follow so close upon the feelings, in which each has its origin, that the more truthful a man is the less they obey his will. In spite of warning I smiled,

[8] The name of poet.
[9] This is a mistake not corrected in Dante's time. Statius was born in Naples.
[10] Died while writing the *Achilleid.*
[11] Set free to go to Heaven, from which, in Purgatory, every one regards himself as banished.

like a man who makes a sign. At this the shade stopped speaking and looked me square in the eyes, there where our feelings show plainest. And it said:

"So that you may bring your great undertaking[12] to a happy end, why did your face wear that amused smile just now?"

Now am I caught on one side and the other; one bids me keep silence; the other speak, because of which I sigh, and my master, understanding, said:

"Fear not to speak; tell him what he asks so earnestly."

Whereon I:

"Mayhap you are amazed, ancient spirit, at my smile, but I would have yet greater amazement seize you. This one who is guiding me heavenward, is that very Virgil from whom you derived the power to sing of men and of gods. If you believe there was another cause for my smile, put it aside as untrue, and be assured it was entirely the result of those words you spoke of him."

Already he was bending down to embrace the feet of my teacher, but Virgil said to him: "Brother, do it not, for you are a shade and you see a shade."[13]

And Statius answered, rising: "Now can you comprehend the intensity of the love with which I

[12] Journey through the universe.

[13] "What shadows we are and what shadows we pursue." Burke.

burn for you, when I forget our emptiness and treat spirits like solid realities."

CANTO XXII

The sixth terrace.

By this time the angel was left behind us, the angel who had directed us to the sixth circle, after erasing one more P from my forehead. And he had said to us that those who have their hearts set on righteousness are "blessed," concluding with the words "who thirst," without the rest.[1]

Virgil begs Statius to tell him how it can be that he, of all people, should be suffering for the vice of avarice. Statius answers that it is not for avarice but for its opposite, prodigality, that he is on this terrace. He says:

"I would have you know that avarice was too much lacking in me, and for this excess, thousands of months have I been punished here."[2]

Virgil now says to Statius that, judging by the matter in his famous poem, it does not appear that at the time of writing it he had been converted.

[1] The angel has omitted that part of the beatitude which includes the word "hunger." This is to be used a little higher up when they actually reach the sixth terrace and the gluttons.

[2] Statius showed no measure in his spending, giving and throwing away what he should have kept, which is as bad as hoarding all one has, and giving nothing.

VIRGIL

"If this is true, what sun, or what candles[3] did so dispel your darkness that thereafter you set sail in the wake of the Fisherman?"[4]

STATIUS

"You first showed me the road to Parnassus, to drink of its fountains, and then you lit my way to God. You did like the man that walks in the night and carries the light behind him, helping not himself, but making those wise who follow, when you said:

> "'The last great age, foretold by sacred rhymes,
> Renews its finish'd course: Saturnian times
> Roll round again: . . .
> A golden progeny from heaven descends.'[5]

"Through you I became a poet, through you a Christian. But in order that you may see more clearly what I am outlining, I will set my hand to filling in the colors.[6] Already the whole world was teeming with the true faith, sown by the messen-

[3] Heavenly, or earthly lights.
[4] St. Peter.
[5] Dryden's translation of the fourth Eclogue of Virgil. As early as the fourth century these lines, the prophecy of the Cumæan Sibyl, were taken to have been a prophecy of the coming of Christ.
[6] He means that he will now give a fuller and more understandable account of his conversion.

gers of the eternal realm, and your words, just quoted, were so much in harmony with the new preachers, that I acquired the habit of going to hear them.[7] From this time they came to seem to me so holy, that when Domitian persecuted them, their lamentations made me weep. And so long as I remained in the world, I aided them, and their upright practises made me scorn all other sects. Before I had led the Greeks, in my poem,[8] as far as the rivers of Thebes, I was baptized: but, through fear, I remained a secret Christian, for long time making pretense of paganism. My lukewarmness[9] caused me to tread the fourth terrace for more than four hundred years."

Virgil and Statius walk on together, talking of poetry, Dante gathering hints for his own.

But soon the pleasant talk was interrupted by a tree which we found in the middle of the road, with apples that were sweet and good to smell. And as a fir-tree tapers upward from branch to branch, so this tapered downward,[10] in order, I think, that no one might climb it. At the side, on which our path was walled,[11] a clear stream fell from the high cliff and sprinkled the foliage below.

[7] The Apostles.
[8] The Thebiad.
[9] Sloth.
[10] Had the shape of an elm tree.
[11] The wall of the next terrace above, from which the water fell.

The two poets drew close to the tree and a voice from among the leaves cried out:

"Of this food you shall have lack."

Then it said:

"Mary thought more, how the marriage feast[12] should be properly set forth, and complete, than of her own mouth,[13] which now intercedes in your behalf; and the dames of ancient Rome were satisfied with water for their drink;[14] and Daniel despised food and got wisdom.[15] The primeval age was fair as gold; with hunger it made acorns savory, and with thirst every streamlet nectar. Honey and locusts were the food with which the Baptist was fed in the wilderness, because of which he is in glory, and so great, as is by the Gospel revealed to you."[16]

CANTO XXIII

While I was straining my eyes to look deep among the green leaves, just as he does who wastes his time hunting the little bird, my more than father said to me:

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[12] The marriage in Cana.

[13] Than of what she should herself eat.

[14] It was said that of old the Roman women did not drink wine.

[15] Daniel i. 8 to 17.

[16] Matthew xi. 11.

This series of magnificent examples of temperance is proclaimed by the mystic voice among the leaves, as proper to be heard by souls purging away the vice of gluttony. It consists of alternating instances taken from sacred and classical

"Come, my son, the time that is assigned to us must be more usefully spent."

I turned my eyes, and not less quickly my steps, toward the Sages[1] who were conversing in a way that made going a pleasure. And of a sudden! both as a lament and as a song, I heard: "O Lord, open thou my lips,"[2] so sung that it gave rise both to joy and sorrow.

"My revered father, what is it that I hear?" and he:

"Shades, perchance, moving past us as they work out their debt of sin."

As pilgrims, wrapt in thought, when they overtake strangers on the road, turn, but do not stop, so, moving at a quicker pace than we, a group of souls, silent and devout, overtook and passed us, gazing back in astonishment upon us. Each was dark and hollow around the eyes, pale of feature, and so wasted that the skin took shape from the bones. The sockets of their eyes looked like rings without gems. Whoever would believe that the smell of an apple, and of water, begetting desire, could produce such effect, if he did not know by experience?

I was still wondering why they were so starved, and what was the cause of their leanness and scurf,

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sources and so coincides with the system adhered to by Dante throughout the penitential terraces of Purgatory.

[1] Virgil and Statius being, because poets, wise men.

[2] Psalm LI. 15.

when all at once from the depth of its head, one of these shades turned his eyes on me, looked carefully and cried aloud:

"What blessed fortune this is for me!"

Never should I have known him by his face, but in his voice I recognized what was gone from his features. This spark[3] rekindled all my knowledge of his altered countenance, and I saw that it was the face of Forese.[4]

Dante expresses surprise that his old friend and companion, who had been dead but five years, should have advanced so far on his way through Purgatory. Forese replies:

"It is my Nella with her flood of tears, who has brought me thus speedily to drink the sweet wormwood of these torments. Her devout prayers and sighs have taken me from the hillside where one waits,[5] and have freed me from the other circles."[6]

Dante says to Forese:

"If you call to mind what you were with me, and I was with you, the memory will be grievous even yet. From that sort of life he,[7] who is in front,

[3] Clue.
[4] A friend of Dante's youth, and a relative of his wife.
[5] Ante-Purgatory.
[6] Pride, Envy, Wrath, Sloth and Avarice.
[7] Virgil.

lured me only the other day. He has guided me, still in the flesh, through the utter darkness and among the truly dead.[8] Thence have his encouragements drawn me upward, ascending and circling the mountain that sets you, whom the world made crooked, straight."[9]

CANTO XXIV

Among the gluttons Dante meets a poet of Lucca, Bonagiunta, and discusses poetry with him. It is in this conversation that he declares his belief, the faith of all men of all times, whether expressed or not, who have written anything worth while and lasting, in poetry or prose, the belief that before all else a man must have ideas; something to write about; something in which he truly takes an inter-

[8] The shades in Hell for whom there is no hope, as distinguished from those in Purgatory, for whom there is not only hope, but ultimate certainty of Heaven.

[9] About this passage there has been much contention, especially as to the part which Dante played in the discreditable relations with Forese, which he here recalls to Forese's attention. "These relations seem to have been (1) ribald attacks on one another," in a still extant group of sonnets: (2) their boon companionship and careless living, the latter of which is implied in the mode of life which is symbolized by the dark forest where Dante found himself gone astray, at the very beginning of Hell. That a youthful friendship, not altogether noble in its conduct, was broken, and that Dante and Forese then vilified each other in verse, seems to be close upon the fact. Here in Purgatory, where all is penitence and confession, the matter is disclosed with touching simplicity, and a gleam of that light of reality, which makes the past live to a degree almost nowhere else equaled among the many undying episodes with which Dante vivifies his marvelous sermon-narrative.

est. This passage in which Dante tells how he wrote, is as clear, as it is brief, and as practically useful, if understood, as it is terse and plain. It is a beautiful example of the great creative artist in the rôle of critic. The shade of Bonagiunta says:

"But tell me, if I am looking upon him, who invented those new rhymes, beginning: 'Ladies who have intelligence of Love'?"[1]

DANTE

"I am one who, when Love inspires me, takes note, and, after the manner which he dictates within, gives utterance."

BONAGIUNTA

"O brother, now I see what it was that hindered the Notary, and Guittone, and me from attaining the sweet new style which I hear.[2] I now see clearly how your pen follows closely after the dictator,[3] which certainly was not the case with ours. And

[1] The first canzone of *The New Life,* Dante's first book, begins with this line. The speaker refers to it as being in the then new style, and wants to know if he is in the presence of the author of that style.

[2] The Notary means a Sicilian poet, Jacopo da Lentino, who, with Guittone of Arezzo, and the speaker himself, failed to attain anything that approached poetic success.

[3] Love.

"'Fool,' said my Muse to me, 'look in thy heart and write.'" Sir Philip Sidney.

he who undertakes to look further can not find more cause for the difference between our style and yours."

After some further talk Dante and Virgil are left behind by Forese. Then:

Not far away there appeared before my eyes the laden and living boughs of another fruit tree.[4] Beneath it I saw people who were holding up their hands, and crying, I know not what, toward the branches, like eager and expectant little children who beg, and he from whom they beg gives not, but to make their longing keener, holds out of reach what they want, and shows it openly.

From among the leaves mystic voices cite famous cases of gluttony, for the hearing and tormenting of the people who beg fruit and are denied. Finally the angel of the pass comes.

As the breeze of May, herald of the dawn, stirs and breathes forth sweetness, full to overflowing, with scent of herb and flower, such an air I felt upon my forehead, and clearly too, the stir of wings which spread an ambrosial fragrance round about. And I heard:

[4] As he was circling the terrace, looking forward, Forese gone out of sight, this tree appeared.

"Blessed are they whom so much grace illumines that their love of taste does not kindle overpowering desire, hungering always so much as is right."[5]

CANTO XXV

The seventh terrace. The main part of this canto is taken up with a difficult discourse by Statius upon generation, and the manner of infusing the soul into the body. Dante asks why the shades of the gluttons are all so emaciated. Statius answers, and tells what the nature of a shade really is, and how it comes to have the appearance of a human body, and the senses of the flesh. This passage, aside from being interesting in itself, is most important as helping us to understand what the shades, or ghosts, really are; the actors of *The Divine Comedy*.

"Open your heart to the truth which is coming, and learn that so soon as the articulation of the brain is perfect in the embryo, God turns to it rejoicing at the handiwork of nature, and breathes into it a spirit replete with strength which absorbs into its own substance whatever it finds active in the embryo, and thereon it becomes an individual soul, which lives, and feels, and centers its thoughts upon itself.[1] And in order that you may be less puzzled

[5] Resisting gluttony.

[1] Becomes conscious of its own existence as an individual, rational being, and, as such, distinguished from all other creatures.

by my words, consider how the sun's warmth, combining with the juice of the grape, becomes wine.[2] At last when Lachesis has no more thread,[3] this soul is set free from the flesh and bears away, latent within itself, its faculties, both the human and the divine,[4] the flesh remaining inactive behind; but memory, intelligence, and will, far more powerful than before.[5] Without a pause, it falls naturally on one or other of the two river banks.[6] There it first learns its destined way. So soon as it reaches its allotted place,[7] its spiritual substance[8] shines out around it in the same shape and size as it had when it dwelt in the living members. And as our atmosphere, charged with moisture, takes on a lovely iridescence, because of the sun's rays reflected in it, so in the other world[9] the air shapes itself to that form which the soul, that has come to[10] its destina-

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[2] As the heat of the sun passes into the juice of the grape and forms wine, so the rational soul, the soul with powers of reasoning, the divine element, which proceeds from God, entering into the vegetative and sensitive soul, human elements, forms the perfect, complete being, i. e., both human and divine, human soul. See Tozer, *English Commentary on La Divina Commedia*, page 346.

[3] When life comes to an end.

[4] That which pertains to the life of the body, and that which pertains to the other, soul or intellect.

[5] Before death.

[6] Of Acheron, if bound for Hell; of Tiber, if bound for Purgatory.

[7] Hell or Purgatory.

[8] The inherent or shaping principle which invisibly makes us what we are, in stature, and features, while we live.

[9] The world of the dead.

[10] In its fall to the shores of Acheron or Tiber.

tion, stamps upon it. And then, as flame follows fire[11] wherever it shifts, so this renewed shape accompanies the spirit. Since from the moment of this transformation it has visibility, it is called a shade, and as such it also receives back all the senses, even the sense of sight; thence we speak, and laugh, and thence we weep and sigh, as you have heard on this mountain. In accord as our desires and our passions mold us are our shades molded."[12]

They now approach the spirits of the lustful, walking in fire and singing, "God of clemency supreme."[13]

And I saw shades walking through the fire whereat I gave heed to them and measured my footsteps to theirs, thus keeping my look on each from moment to moment.[14] When their hymn was done, they cried aloud: "I know not a man;"[15] then with low tones recommenced the hymn. This in turn finished, they cried anew; "Diana abode in the wood,

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[11] Fire is here used to mean the vital principle and not what we generally understand by fire.

[12] The spirit body. Thus Dante accounts for the emaciation of the shades of the gluttons, so deep-eyed, hollow-cheeked and thin.

[13] The hymn containing a prayer for purity.

[14] They in the fire, and Dante outside of it, walking with them.

[15] The words of Mary to the angel of the Annunciation, Luke i. 34.

and from it drove Helice,[16] who had tasted the poison of Venus." Then they again began to sing: and afterward loudly proclaimed husbands and wives who were chaste, as virtue and marriage enjoin. And this procedure suffices for the whole of the time that the fire burns them. By such cure, and such means, it is necessary that the last P should be blotted out.[17]

CANTO XXVI

Among the many shades purging themselves of lust in the fire, Dante meets one in particular who tells him who he is:

"I am Guido Guinicelli,[1] and I am already cleansing myself because I repented before my last hour."

Such as the two sons of Lycurgus became when in the midst of their rage and sorrow they again beheld their mother,[2] such I became, but not so utterly carried away, when I heard this one name himself, in poetry, my father, and the father of others, my betters, and of all who ever made sweet and grace-

[16] A nymph who bore a son to Jupiter.

[17] The last P, standing for the last of the mortal sins, namely Lust.

[1] The most famous of Italian poets before Dante. He belonged in Bologna.

[2] At the moment when Lycurgus, in grief and rage was about to kill his wife for carelessly causing the death of their infant son, she (Hypsipyle) was recognized, and saved, by her elder sons, Euneus and Thoas.

ful rhymes of love.[3] Absorbed in thought, not hearing or speaking, utterly amazed, I walked on, gazing a long time at him. But because of the fire I did not go close to him. When I was fully satisfied with looking, I offered myself with the sort of vow which begets trust, as being entirely ready to serve him.

And he to me:

"From what I hear, you make such a clear impression on me, that Lethe can not wash it away, or dim it. But if, just now, your vow was truly sworn, tell me why, in word and look, you show that you hold me so dear?"

And I to him:

"Your sweet songs, which shall endure as long as modern usage continues, make the very ink in which they are written, dear to me."[4]

CANTO XXVII

The day was fading, when the angel of God, all gladness, appeared to us. He was standing on the

[3] Dante regarded Guido Guinicelli as the father of Italian poetry.

[4] Guido wrote in the vulgar tongue, in Italian, the language of the people, as opposed to Latin, the language of church and court, and of learning generally. This was the modern usage. Dante's love for his teacher, father to him in poetry, is equaled only by his affection for Brunetto Latini (Hell, Canto XV). Together, the two passages express such a depth of reverence for a good teacher as is not surpassed in the realm of letters. Dante himself, in his own work, illustrates the truth of Ruskin's remark that a good teacher is to be known by the fact that his pupils are better than he.

edge of the terrace, outside the fire, and was singing:

"Blessed are the pure in heart," with voice surpassing human.

Then:

"No one advances beyond this spot, O holy souls, if he has not first suffered in the fire: enter it, and to the song on the far side, sharpen your ears."

This he said to us, as we drew near to him. On hearing this I became like one who is put in the pit.[1] With clasped hands I stretched forward looking at the fire, picturing to myself human bodies that I had seen burned at the stake. My kind guides turned to me, and Virgil said:

"Son, here may be torment, but not death. Be careful! be careful! for if even on the back of Geryon I guided you safe, what can I not do now that we are so much nearer God? Believe for certain, that if you were to stand within this fire for a full thousand years, it could not make you bald of a single hair. And if perchance you think that I am deceiving you, approach it, and make trial of it with your own hands, upon the hem of your garments. From this moment lay aside every fear; turn this way, and come forward in perfect safety."

Notwithstanding, and in spite of conscience, I did not stir.

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[1] Like a criminal about to be buried alive.

When he saw me, still motionless and obdurate, he said, a little disturbed:

"Look, son, between you and Beatrice is this wall."

As at the name of Thisbe, Pyramus, on the point of death, opened his eyes and gazed on her, at the time when the mulberry turned purple,[2] so, my obstinacy being softened, I turned to my wise leader, hearing the name that ever in my memory wells up. At this he nodded his head, and said:

"Do we want to stay longer on this side?" Then he smiled as one does at a child won by an apple.

Thereupon, leading, he entered the fire, praying Statius, who for a long way had come between us, to follow on behind. When I was within the fire I would have thrown myself into molten glass to cool me, so intensely did it burn. My beloved father, to encourage me, spoke incessantly of Beatrice, saying:

"Already I seem to see her eyes."

A voice singing on the far side guided us, and we, heeding only it, issued forth where the ascent began.

"Come, ye blessed of my Father,"[3] sounded within a light that shone so bright that I could not look at it.

[2] The lovers met under a mulberry tree and, at the prayer of Thisbe, who was dying by her own hand because Pyramus was dead, the fruit of the mulberry turned from white to dark.

[3] Matthew xxv. 34.

"The sun is sinking fast," it added, "and the night approaches; tarry not, but quicken your steps until the west is dark."

The passage led straight up through the rock, in such direction that in front I cut off the sun's rays which were already low. We had mounted but few of the stairs when by the disappearance of my shadow, both I and the sages knew that the sun had set. And ere the horizon in all its boundlessness had taken on one color, and night had all her ornaments, each of us made his bed upon a stair, for the nature of the mountain took away the power to climb, rather than the desire.

As goats, that have been agile and fleet upon the mountain peaks, ere they have fed, grow quiet while chewing the cud, hushed in the shade; so long as the sun is hot, tended by the shepherd who, leaning on his staff, watches over them; and as the herdsman who lives in the open, spends the night beside his quiet flock, taking care that no wild beast scatter it; such then were all three of us, I like a goat, and they like shepherds, hemmed in on either side by the high ledges. Little of what was outside could be seen, but in that little I beheld the stars both brighter and larger than usual. So, musing, and looking out upon them,[4] sleep laid hold on me, sleep which often reveals an event before it takes place.

At the hour, I think, when Venus, who seems al-

[4] The stars.

ways burning with the fire of love, first shone upon the mountain,[5] I had a dream wherein I saw a lady, young and lovely, walking in a meadow and gathering flowers. She was singing:

"Let him who asks my name know that I am Leah; and that while I move about, I ply my fair hands to weave me a garland. To have delight before my mirror, I here adorn myself, but my sister Rachel never forsakes her looking-glass, sitting before it the livelong day. She is as eager to look at her sweet eyes, as I to deck me with my hands. Contemplation is her joy; work is mine."[6]

And now, because of the brightness which precedes the sun, and which to pilgrims is more welcome the nearer home they pass each night, darkness was vanishing on every side and with it my slumber. Then I rose, seeing the great masters[7] already risen.

"That sweet fruit[8] which the care of mortals seeks upon so many branches, shall this day satisfy your hunger."

These words Virgil said to me, and never were gifts that gave so much pleasure. So intense did

[5] Venus as morning star is rising in the dawn.

[6] The mirror and the looking-glass mean the face of God, gazing at which Leah, symbolizing the active, and Rachel the contemplative life, find their bliss. The dream foreshadows what is soon to occur and be seen in the Earthly Paradise, when Dante shall meet Matilda and Beatrice; a sort of proem.

[7] Statius and Virgil.

[8] The Supreme Good.

wish on wish to be above, come to me, that after these words I felt my wings with every step grow stronger for the flight.

When the stairway beneath our feet had been all gone over, and we were on the topmost step, Virgil fixed his eyes on me and said:

"Son, you have seen the temporal fire,[9] and the eternal,[10] and you have now reached a place where, unaided, I can see no farther.[11] I have guided you so far with understanding and with skill. From now on let your own pleasure guide you. You are beyond the steep places, beyond the narrow. See! the sun is shining full upon your brow; behold the young grass, the flowers, and the shrubs which in this place[12] the earth of itself brings forth.[13] Until, with joy overflowing, the lovely eyes appear which, full of tears, bade me go to you, you may sit upon the grass and stroll among the flowers. Await no further word or sign, from me. Free, upright, and sound, is your own will. It would be wrong not to act according to its dictates; wherefore over yourself I crown and mitre you."[14]

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[9] Purgatory.

[10] Hell.

[11] Virgil representing human reason and knowledge can not act as guide in the Earthly Paradise, to which they are just now coming.

[12] Earthly Paradise.

[13] Without seed.

[14] Virgil, as it were, bestows on Dante complete jurisdiction over himself. The crown refers to temporal conduct; the mitre to spiritual. Being purged of the seven sins, and of

CANTO XXVIII

Eager to explore the heavenly forest which, dense, and always green, tempered the light of the new day, without longer wait I left the mountain's edge and slowly took the level ground which everywhere breathed fragrance. A gentle breeze that changed not its direction, fanned my brow. It bent the light boughs toward the west, but not enough to stop the little birds singing in the tops. There they sang joyously among the leaves, and there they welcomed the morning zephyr which accompanied their songs.

By this time, walking slowly, I had gone so far into the primeval wood that I could no longer see the place where I had entered. Suddenly, my way was cut off by a stream whose gentle rippling bent leftward the grass that grew upon its margin. All the waters that are clearest upon Earth, would seem

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inclination for any one of them, Virgil tells Dante that from now on his own desires will be safe guides to good, and that his will is not only free, but can not make an error. As Dante is here represented, though himself soon to return to the world, and the struggle with temptation and vice, such is every soul upon the termination of its purgatorial journey, and at the moment of admittance to the higher, the everlasting world of goodness and God, which is Paradise. Dante uses himself as a symbol of the purified souls of the elect. The beautiful imagery of Leah and Rachel, and the kingly sort of freedom bestowed on Dante by Virgil, along with the wonderful beauty of earthly things, intensified by an indefinable sort of mystical beauty—in a word, the whole latter part of the twenty-seventh Canto of Purgatory is really the prologue to the Earthly Paradise and all that it contains of transcendent loveliness and mystery.

murky compared with that which here hides nothing, as it flows on, dark, almost black, beneath the perpetual shadow,[1] which never lets enter ray of sun or moon.

My feet I moved not, but with my eyes I crossed to the other side of the little stream and gazed in amazement on the variety of fresh blossoms. On the opposite bank, just as when something appears suddenly which diverts all one's thoughts, there appeared a solitary lady. As she moved she sang, and all the while she busied herself gathering flowers from among those which brightened her path.

"Fair lady, happy in the glow of love, to judge by looks, which are the tell-tales of the heart, may it please you," said I to her, "to come so near the stream that I can hear what you are singing. You make me remember where and what Proserpine was at the time her mother lost her, and she the spring."[2]

As, dancing, a lady turns, keeping her feet close to the ground, and together, one foot scarcely set before the other, so, this lady, and directed her modest eyes, lowered in the manner of a maiden, across the red and yellow flowers, upon me. She

[1] Due to the dense foliage of the wood.

[2] Ceres was the mother of Proserpine, who, while gathering flowers, was carried off to the underworld by Pluto. It was so Proserpine lost the spring; a lovely story, retold by Hawthorne with such charm as few of the stories of Greece have ever been retold. The finality and tenderness of Dante's line recall the similar finality and tenderness of Pericles in speaking of Athens, and of her young men killed in battle; "the city has lost its youth and the year has lost its spring."

granted my prayer and drew so near that her sweet tones reached me with their meaning.[3] When she arrived at the place where the water of the pretty stream bathed the grass, she rejoiced my very soul by her eyes. I do not believe that so fair a light shone beneath the lids of Venus when she was transfixed by her own son, in a manner utterly unusual.[4] There, opposite, on the right bank she stood, smiling, and gathering those varicolored flowers which grow without the planting of seed in that exalted place. The stream put three paces between us; but the Hellespont where Xerxes crossed it, to this day a curb upon all human pride, was not more hated by Leander because it flowed between Sestos and Abydos, than this stream was hated by me, because it did not open.

"You are newcomers," she began, "and mayhap you wonder why I am smiling here in this place which was chosen for the cradle of the human race. The psalm, 'For thou, Lord, hast made me glad,' contains the light that will illumine your understanding."[5]

[3] He could distinguish the words of her song.

[4] Cupid accidentally hit Venus with one of his arrows, thus causing her to fall in love with her son, Adonis.

[5] Psalm xcii:4. "For thou Lord, hast made me glad through thy work; I will triumph in the works of thy hands." Matilda smiles with gladness as she looks at the forest and the flowers, God's handiwork. Psalm xix. Matilda has seen in the faces of the poets an expression of surprise at her smiling in so sacred a place.

The fair lady, who is Matilda, now discourses on the nature of the Earthly Paradise and tells how the generation of plants, and the conditions of the atmosphere, differ in their procedure from similar phenomena on Earth. She further tells about the stream on whose banks they are standing; how it neither loses by evaporation nor is increased by rainfall, but maintains a steady flow, and even volume, in accord with the will of God. It is here in the Earthly Paradise that Dante begins to pile miracle upon fact. Up all the steps of Purgatory he insists upon the loveliness and grandeur of nature, as we know her on Earth, in all her aspects, great and small. Now he begins to raise the real above itself, and in this he continues steadily until from the Earthly he carries us to the Heavenly Paradise, and from the outer circles of it, to the innermost, where is God Himself.

As Dante's Hell can be likened to a single magnificent picture of shadow, his Purgatory and Paradise, inseparable halves of one great whole, can be likened to a single magnificent picture of light. Each, at any given point, seems total darkness, or dazzling light, but move the mind's eye up or down upon the canvas, i. e., through the cantos, and it instantly becomes sensible of increasing darkness, or increasing light. That same strength and delicacy of perception which enabled Rembrandt to see, where most men only grope; which made him the

discoverer of the beauties and meanings which darkness holds; that same outward eyesight, and inward vision, which enabled Turner to see, where most men are blinded, thus constituting him, before all other artists, the revealer of the wonders of the loveliness which light holds—these attributes, combined in Dante, gave him the power to penetrate the abyss, scale the mountain, fly the heavens, and to report the things he saw therein, as no other human being has ever done. Each of these men had his own, a masterly technique, but of far greater import to art is the fact that each of them had the power to see and understand, in a word, have ideas, which are the alpha and omega of all art.

In *Sartor Resartus,* Carlyle says: "To each is given a certain inward talent, a certain outward environment of Fortune, to each by wisest combination of these two, a certain maximum of capability."

For the maximum of capability yet vouchsafed the world in the forms of painting, and of writing, the essential substance of which is ideas concerning darkness and light, literal and figurative, light and darkness, we must go to Rembrandt, to Turner, to Dante.

Matilda says, speaking of the stream:

"On this side it flows downward, having the power to wash away the memory of sin; on the

other side, to restore the memory of good deeds. On this side it is called Lethe, on that, Eunoë; and these things it does not do unless it is tasted first on this, and then on that side. The flavor of this water is above all others."[6]

She closes her speech with these lovely lines about Eden:

"Those[7] who in old time sang of the Golden Age, and its happy state, perchance upon Parnassus, dreamed of this place; here dwelt the root of mankind in innocence;[8] here are eternal spring and every fruit; this is the nectar of which they all sing."

CANTOS XXIX TO XXXIII

The four concluding cantos of Purgatory give a marvelous figurative account of the history of the Church, Church Militant and Church Triumphant, and of the words of Beatrice when she accuses Dante of having been unfaithful to her, and of his answering and entire confession. After this he passes through the waters of Lethe, and for-

[6] Lethe washes away the memory of past sins and flows downward with them to Hell. Eunoë, stream of "kindly thoughts," equips the soul for the place, Earthly Paradise, where no other thoughts can exist.

[7] Virgil was accredited with having foretold the coming of Christ in what he said in the fourth Eclogue about the Golden Age. See Canto XXII, page 210.

[8] Adam and Eve.

gets sin, both the sins of the world, and his own sins, and then, through the waters of Eunoë, thus renewing memory of all the good that he had ever done. At this point he is ready for Heaven, and the journey of the mountain, and the sojourn in the Earthly Paradise, come to a mystically quiet and happy ending.

The passages dealing with the Mystic Procession of the Church have figurative reference to the Old and New Testaments, the books of each, and their bearing upon the Church on Earth, and in Heaven; its persecutions and its victory. Never, save in Revelations, has pageantry risen to such height. It is the work of a consummate colorist and designer. It goes, as it were, uttering the simplicity that is sublime. Nowhere else does Dante so surely prove himself to be of the Italian thirteenth-fourteenth century, and of the very greatest men of that, or any other time. Nowhere else does he so unquestionably establish his like-mindedness to Giotto, and to the artists who did the early frescoes in the Pisan cemetery. That he *spoke,* and they *painted,* constitutes no essential difference. Of one mind, they thought alike. "The pictures on the walls of the churches are the books of the common people," said Pope Gregory VII. The Italian language was the language of the common people. It was to the common people that Dante's pages, and the walls of Pisa and Assisi made their intended appeal. All,

alike, were preachers; preachers of profound truth set forth in forms of exalted beauty. There is much that may be difficult to grasp in the form, but little that is difficult to grasp in the meaning of the work of these men, even to-day. If this were not so, our twentieth century would not pause long, in increasing numbers, and with delight, before such work. Wherever and whenever men love color, and form, and fragrance, and beauty, and truth, there and then will the Last Judgment frescoes, the so-called "Four Last Things" of the Campo Santo in Pisa, the frescoed life of St. Francis, in Assisi, and Dante's Mystic Procession of the Church, be prized.

In reading the concluding cantos of Purgatory I know of nothing so truly useful as a few sentences in Professor A. C. Bradley's address on *Poetry for Poetry's Sake*, Oxford, 1901. "When you are reading a poem, I would ask—not analyzing it, and much less criticizing it, but allowing it, as it proceeds, to make its full impression on you through the exertion of your re-creating imagination—do you then apprehend and enjoy as one thing a certain meaning or substance, and as another thing certain articulate sounds, and do you somehow compound these two? Surely you do not, any more than you apprehend apart, when you see some one smile, those lines in a face which express a feeling, and the feeling that the lines express."

As far as possible, and before all else, when first reading these marvelous cantos of Purgatory we should read for a full impression. It is time enough later to read for detail, and hidden meanings, and allusion. To begin with, take them as you would a fine picture which you knew you were to see for ten minutes only, and never afterward; as you would a splendid pageant upon which you came unexpectedly, not allowing your sense and enjoyment of the whole to be marred because you are puzzled by the meaning of any, even many, of the details, for after all, the whole is above the parts, and the parts exist for it, not it for the parts. In art, we should first try to look at the whole.

When Matilda had done speaking, as if transported by love, she began to sing: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven."[1] And, like the nymphs who used to wander solitary through the wooded glades, some seeking, others avoiding, the sun, she began to take her way along the bank, counter to the current, and I followed, keeping pace with her short steps. Together we had not gone a hundred steps, when the borders of the stream took a turn and I found myself once more facing East. Nor had we been moving long in this direction, when the lady turned squarely toward me, saying:

"My brother, look and listen."

[1] Psalm xxxii:1.

All at once an unexpected light flashed through the immense forest in every direction, so that I questioned if it were not lightning. But because lightning goes as soon as it comes, and this stayed, and grew brighter and brighter, I said to myself: "What can this thing be?" Then a sweet melody floated through the bright air. It was then that righteous indignation made me upbraid the foolhardiness of Eve, who, the only woman, and just created, there where the Earth and Heaven were obedient, could not check her curiosity,[2] had she done which, I should have tasted these ineffable delights before, and for a longer time. As I walked onward, among so many first fruits of the eternal pleasure, self-absorbed, but yearning for still loftier delights, the whole atmosphere beneath the green boughs, in front of us, began to glow like fire, and the sweet melody changed to song.

O thrice sacred Virgins[3] if ever for your sake I endured hunger, cold, and sleepless nights, this is the time to claim my reward. Now verily should Helicon gush forth in my behalf, and Urania, with her choir, aid me to put into verse things difficult to conceive.

A little farther on when I had come so near to them that distance no longer blurred those characteristic details, on which reason bases judgment, I discovered that seven golden trees which appeared in

[2] Remain in ignorance of anything.

[3] The Muses to whom Dante makes invocation; Helicon, whose waters of inspiration he craves; Urania, the muse of

front of us were an illusion, for then I distinguished them as candlesticks,[4] and I heard voices singing "Hosanna." On high this fair array was blazing brighter far than the full moon at clear midnight. Utterly amazed I turned to Virgil and he answered me with a look no less astonished. Then I turned back to those sublime things which were coming toward us at a pace slower than that of new-wedded brides.

The lady chid me, saying:

"Why are you zealous only to gaze at those living lights and heedless of that which is coming behind them?"

Then I realized that there were people following the candlesticks, as after leaders. Their raiment was white, and such whiteness never was on Earth. The shining water on my left gave back reflections like a mirror as I looked at it. When I reached a place where nothing but the stream intervened, in order to see better, I stopped. And I saw that the flames, going on before, left ribbons of color in the air behind them. These floated out like pennons, so that they barred the air overhead with seven stripes whose colors were those with which the sun paints his bow, and Delia[5] her girdle. These streamers reached back farther than I could see, and the outer

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Astronomy, and hence of the heavenly things with which he is now to deal.

[4] The seven spirits of God. See Rev. iv:5.

[5] The moon.

ones were, to the best of my judgment, ten paces apart.[6] Beneath so lovely a sky as I describe, two by two, came four and twenty Elders, crowned with fleur-de-lis. Together all were chanting:

"Blessed art thou among the daughters of Adam, and thy loveliness forever blessed."

When the flowers and tender plants of the opposite bank were free of this congregation of the elect,[7] there followed, just as star rises upon star in the firmament, four living creatures, each with a coronal of green leaves. They had six wings and their feathers were full of eyes. The eyes of Argus[8] would be such, were they still alive. But to describe them, Reader, I make no more verses, for other spending[9] compels me to save here. Go to Ezekiel, who pictures them as he saw them come from the north, with wind, cloud, and lightnings;[10] and as you find them in his pages such did I see them, save

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[6] No better instance of the untrammelled imagination, couched in words of mathematical precision, can be found elsewhere, even in the work of Dante, who for this sort of thing is famous among all artists; whose pictures are, for this very reason, so convincingly real; whose art, like all transcendent art, falls short of, and exceeds, at one and the same time, the phenomena of nature on which it is based, and to which it is ever faithful. A sentence of the poet-artist, William Blake, is to the point. "To generalize is to be an idiot. To particularize is the great distinction of merit."

[7] The Elders.

[8] Argus, famous for keenness of sight, because of his hundred eyes.

[9] Of my poetical strength.

[10] Ezekiel i :4-7.

that, as to the wings, John[11] agrees with me, and not with Ezekiel.

In the space between these four living creatures[12] was a two-wheeled triumphal chariot drawn by a Griffon.[13] His wings rose high up between the midmost of the bars of varicolored light, nor did harm to one of them by cleaving it. So high did they rise that their tips were lost to view. The parts of the Griffon that were bird, were golden; the rest were scarlet and white. Neither Africanus nor Augustus delighted Rome with so splendid a chariot; but even that of the Sun would look poor by comparison. By the right wheel three ladies[14] were dancing in a circle. One of them was so rosy that

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[11] Revelations iv:8. Here again is an extraordinary instance of the concreteness in reporting imaginary things which clothes report with material reality. These three, Ezekiel, John, Dante, have seen the same creatures,—who, reading their words, can doubt it?—as plainly as the living animals on Earth, but in one respect Ezekiel and John differ. When Dante's turn came, his eyes confirm John's seeing and report. It is not difficult, in the light of such a passage, to understand what Emerson meant by saying: "I think, if I were professor of Rhetoric,—teacher of the art of writing well to young men,—I should use Dante for my text-book. Come hither, youth, and learn how the brook that flows at the bottom of your garden, or the farmer who ploughs the adjacent field, your father and mother, your debts and credits, and your web of habits are the very best basis of poetry, and the material which you must work up. Here is an imagination that rivals in closeness and precision the senses. But we must prize him as we do a rainbow, we can appropriate nothing of him." Journals 1849.

[12] The Evangelists.

[13] A creature half lion, half eagle, signifying the divine and the human natures in Christ.

[14] Faith, Hope, Charity.

in fire she would have been scarcely distinguishable. The second looked as if her flesh and bone were emerald. The third was as new-fallen snow. Now their dancing seemed to be led by the white, now by the red, the other two keeping quick step, or slow, in time with the leader.[15] On the left, four ladies,[16] in purple raiment, were making festival, and following the time set by her who had three eyes in her[17] head.

Behind the group which I have described, I saw come, two old men, unlike in garb, but in bearing similar, both dignified and grave. One[18] of them appeared to be a disciple of that great Hippocrates, whom Nature made for the creatures that she holds dearest; the other[19] showed a very different disposition, carrying so shining and so sharp a sword that it made me tremble even across the river. Then I saw come,[20] four persons of humble appearance, and last of all a solitary old man, walking in sleep, but with lively countenance.[21] And these seven were

[15] Hope, as in reality, always following Faith or Charity—i. e., Love.

[16] Prudence, Justice, Temperance, Fortitude.

[17] Prudence.

[18] St. Luke, "the beloved physician."

[19] St. Paul.

[20] St. James, St. Peter, St. John, St. Jude, representing the Epistles.

[21] St. John representing Revelation. He is made old in reference to the fact that he outlived all his generation, and this, so that he might give more information about Christ to the new generation.

clothed like the first group,[22] but in place of lilies their heads were crowned with roses and other crimson flowers. To see them at a distance one would have sworn they were all on fire above their brows.

And when the chariot had come opposite to me, a peal of thunder sounded, and the noble host appeared to be forbidden further progress, halting when the leading ensigns stopped.[23]

CANTO XXX

When the seven candlesticks of the Empyrean—which never knew setting nor rising, nor were ever hidden, save by sin, had indicated his duty to every one there assembled, like the unrising and unsetting Bear by which the mariner steers his course to port—stopped, the Elders, whose place was between the Griffon and the candlesticks, turned to the chariot, as to that wherein was their peace, and one of them, as if sent from Heaven, chanting, sang:

"Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse," and all the others followed.[1]

[22] In white raiment.

[23] The candlesticks.

[1] The candlesticks signify the seven spirits of God which belong in the first Heaven, his dwelling place, the Empyrean. The constellation of the Bear, with its seven stars, is figuratively used, and the Pole star, and the mariner, and the sea of life, are all figuratively employed, and carry clear implications. The four and twenty Elders represent the inspired books of the Old Testament, and the Chariot is the Church. The words sung are from the Song of Solomon. iv:8.

As the blessed at the last trump shall rise swiftly from the grave, singing *Hallelujah* with mortal voice restored, so, at the summons of the great Elder, there uprose upon the divine chariot a hundred ministers and messengers of life eternal. All were saying:

"Blessed is he that cometh;"[2]

And, scattering flowers;

"With generous hands, O give ye thy lilies."[3]

Ere now, at dawn, I have seen the eastern sky all rosy, and the other parts of Heaven beautiful and clear, and the sun, rising, remain long while tempered behind mists. Under such a sky, and within a cloud of flowers, uptossed by angel hands, and falling all about, a lady with olive-crown above a white veil, and robe of flame-color, beneath a green mantle, appeared to me.[4] And my spirit which for so long a time[5] had not been broken down,

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[2] Matthew xxi:9.

[3] Virgil *Æn.* Vi. 884. Dante, by introducing this charming line pays a great honor to his dear poet. When Virgil is about to go, and Beatrice is about to come, here in the Earthly Paradise, and in the very presence of the Church, Dante puts words from the Song of Solomon, and from the Æneid, into the mouths of the Elders. The doing of this thing, and the way of its doing, are alike lovely.

> *"Tutti dicean: Benedicitus, qui venis;*
> *E fior'gittando di sopra e dintorno:*
> *Manibus o date lilia plenis."*
>
> Purgatorio XXX 19-22.

[4] The olive means peace and wisdom. White, green and flame or crimson, are the colors of Faith, Hope and Charity.

[5] Beatrice had been dead ten years.

was vanquished by her presence, not because I saw[6] her, but because of the inconceivable effect she had on me, I felt the tremendous power of the love of bygone days.

As soon as this ennobling power, to which even in boyhood I had yielded entire allegiance, made itself known, I turned with that confidence which makes a frightened child run to his mother, to say to Virgil:

"Not a drop of blood is in me but trembles; I recognize the signals of the ancient flame."[7]

But Virgil had taken himself away; Virgil, beloved father; Virgil, to whom, for my salvation, I had surrendered myself completely. Nor was that Earthly Paradise, which our first mother lost us, compensation enough to make me hold back the tears, which flowed down dark across my dew-washed[8] cheeks.

"Dante, though Virgil be gone away, weep not, but save your tears, for they must yet flow for other cause."

As an admiral, standing at prow or stern, reviews his sailors, urging them to do their best, so, at the left side of the chariot—when I turned, hearing my

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[6] Beatrice is still hidden beneath her veil.

[7] Dante translates a line from the *Æneid,* IV. 28, exactly. "*Agnosco veteris vestigia flammæ*"—and in doing so continues the tremendous compliment already spoken of in Note 3.

[8] See Canto I, page 145.

own name which of necessity is here set down—I beheld the lady who had first appeared to me amid the angelic cloud of flowers, her eyes turned square upon me from across the stream. Although the veil which fell from her olive chaplet, partially concealed her, regal in aspect, and still austere in mien, she continued, speaking as one who holds back his warmest words:

"Look carefully at me: truly I am, I am indeed Beatrice. How could you approach this mountain? Did you not know that here man is happy?"

My eyes dropped to the clear stream, but, seeing myself in it, I turned them to the grass, so great was the shame upon my brow. She seemed stern, as a mother sometimes seems to her son, for bitter is the taste of sharp pity.

She kept silence, and all at once the angels chanted:

"In Thee, O Lord, do I put my trust;" but beyond the line, "Thou hast set my feet in a large room," they did not sing.[9] Even as the snow, frozen, blown, and packed by the Sclavonian winds, among the living rafters,[10] on the ridge of Italy, later when warm winds blow, melts, and trickles through itself, and the Earth steams, such was I, who, neither shed tears, nor sighed, before the song of those creatures whose chants are tuned eternally to the music of the

[9] Psalm xxxi:1-8.
[10] The trees upon the Apennines.

spheres. But when in their sweet harmonies I realized there was greater pity for me than if they had said: "Lady, why do you so shame him?" the ice that was fixed hard around my heart turned to steam and water, and, in anguish, surged forth from my breast through mouth and eyes.

Beatrice speaks to the angels, saying:

"For a time I supported him with my face; and, showing him my young eyes, I led him in the right way. When I had come to the threshold of my second age,[11] changing mortal for immortal life, he abandoned me and gave himself to others. When I had risen from flesh to spirit, and my beauty and my virtue were increased, I became less dear and pleasing to him, and he turned his feet from the right path, in pursuit of seeming, but not real, good, which pays no promise in full. Nor were the heavenly warnings which I obtained for him, dreams and inspirations, of avail to call him back, so little did he heed them. So low had he fallen that every plan for his salvation was insufficient, save showing him the damned. To bring this to pass I visited the gate of the dead, and to that one[12] who guided him up hither, I prayed with tears.

"God's high command would be transgressed, if Lethe should be crossed, and its water should be

[11] She was leaving youth at the time her death occurred.
[12] Virgil.

quaffed without the tax of such repentance as is paid with tears."

CANTO XXXI

"O you who are on the far side of this sacred stream," said she, continuing without break, and turning the point of her argument upon me, which even edgewise had cut so keenly:

"Say, say, if this is true? to such a tremendous accusation your own confession must be made."

My faculties were so confused, that my voice, rising, died before it reached my lips. She waited a little, then said:

"What are you thinking about? Answer me, for this water has not yet washed away the bitter memories in your heart."

Shame and fear together forced such a faint "Yes" from me, that, to hear it, her eyes must needs have read my lips.

Beatrice goes on and chides him still further, saying:

"And what allurements, or what compensations, did other faces promise that they could lead you astray?"

Heaving a dismal sigh, I had scarcely voice enough to answer, and, only with difficulty, could my lips utter it. In tears I said:

"The present things of life, and the deceitful pleasures of Earth led me astray, so soon as your face was hidden."

She said:

"Had you kept silence, or had you denied what you have confessed, your sin would be no less evident, by such a Judge is it known. But when the accusation of sin bursts from the sinner's own lips, then in our Court, the grindstone turns back against the edge.[1] But in order that you may still feel shame for the error of your ways, and that when you again hear the Sirens you may be stronger, dry your tears, and listen; for you shall hear how my buried flesh should have led you in the opposite course. Never did nature or art set such pleasure before you as the fair form I had in life, and which now is dust. But if supreme joy was taken from you by my death, what mortal thing should afterward have moved your love? You should indeed have risen at the first arrow-prick of mortality, after me who had put on immortality."

As children, silent with shame, stand, looking on the ground, listening, conscience-stricken, and repentant, so I stood. And she said:

"Since hearing grieves you, lift up your beard and you shall suffer greater grief through seeing."

[1] In the court of Heaven the grindstone turns with the sword of justice, so that the edge grows ever sharper; but when confession comes it turns the stone back, that is, blunts the edge of the sword.

Easier is a sturdy oak uprooted by a north, or southeast wind, than it was for me to lift my chin at her command. And when by the beard she asked for my eyes, full well I understood the sting of her allusion.[2] And when I had lifted my face, I saw that the angels had ceased strewing flowers, and my eyes, as yet but little reassured, saw Beatrice turned toward the animal that is one person only, in twofold nature.[3] Even beneath her veil, and beyond the stream, she seemed to me to more exceed her mortal beauty than on Earth she surpassed the beauty of all others. The nettle of repentance so stung me, that of all other things[4] that which had gained most of my love was that which now I most abhorred. So overcome was I by self-acknowledged guilt that I swooned, and what I then became she[5] knows, who was the cause.

Then when I came back to consciousness I saw standing over me the lady whom I had discovered, wandering, solitary, and she was saying:

"Hold to me, hold to me."

She had drawn me into the stream up to the throat, and was dragging me after her, she herself

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[2] Dante, although he had a beard, and was a man, still lacked the wisdom and restraint which should accompany manhood, is the meaning.

[3] The Griffon, Christ, one person in twofold nature, i. e., God, and man.

[4] Whatever had attracted him most, after the death of Beatrice, is what he now most hates.

[5] Beatrice.

moving on the water light as a shuttle. Nearing the blessed shore[6] I heard, "Purge me,"[7] so sweetly chanted, that I can not recall it, and much less can I write it. The beautiful lady opened her arms, put them about my head, and immersed me so that I was obliged to swallow the water. Then she drew me forth, and led me, still wet, within the circle of the four beautiful creatures,[8] and each of them put her arm about me.

"Here we are nymphs, and in Heaven we are stars;[9] before Beatrice descended to Earth we were appointed to be her handmaids. We will lead you to her lovely eyes, but in order to see the light of joy that is in them, your vision must be quickened by the three, on the far side of the chariot, whose insight is deeper than ours."[10]

Singing these sentences, they began; then led me to the breast of the Griffon, where Beatrice was standing, turned toward us.

"See to it," said they, "that you stint not your gaze; we have set you before the emeralds,[11] whence,

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[6] When he entered the Earthly Paradise. Blessed shore because that on which Beatrice is standing.

[7] "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." Psalm li:7.

[8] Justice, Temperance, Prudence and Fortitude.

[9] These four (see Note 8), the Cardinal Virtues, lead up to Theology, the science of heavenly things. They are the four bright stars (see Purg. VIII), which threw such strong light on the face of Cato, see Purg. I.

[10] Faith, Hope and Charity, the virtues needed for penetrating the mysteries that underlie Theology.

[11] The eyes of Beatrice. Dante more than once refers to

in days gone by, Love drew his darts against you."

A thousand desires hotter than fire riveted my eyes upon her eyes, that now, for me, again were shining. But they remained fixed upon the Griffon. In them I beheld the twofold animal reflected as brightly as the sun in a mirror, first one, and then his other nature.[12]

Think, Reader, if I marveled when I saw the thing remain motionless in itself, and yet, in its reflection, undergo change.

While my soul, o'erflowing with awe and gladness, was feasting on that food which both satisfies and whets the appetite, those other three came forward. Their bearing showed that they were of a more exalted order, as they danced to the caroling of the angels. The words they sang were:

"Turn, turn your eyes, O Beatrice, upon your faithful one, who has come so far to see you. Of your grace grant us the grace of unveiling your mouth[13] to him, so that he may see the second beauty which you conceal."

O splendor of living and everlasting light! Who is there who ever grew pale in the shadows of Par-

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the green color of her eyes. Longfellow says that green eyes are praised by Spanish poets and by poets of others countries too.

> "An eagle, madam,
> Hath not so green, so quick, so fair an eye,
> As Paris hath." *Romeo and Juliet,* Act III, Sc. v.

[12] The human and the divine.

[13] Her eyes are demonstration of truth; the smile of her mouth persuasion to truth.

nassus, or drunk at its well, that would not have a mind o'erburdened were he to attempt to picture you as you appeared, disclosed to full view, in that place where the harmony of Heaven enfolds you?

CANTO XXXII

My eyes were so fixed and intent upon satisfying their ten years' thirst, that my other senses altogether lapsed. To right and left everything was equally indifferent to me, so completely did her saintly smile enthrall my vision in its former toils.

The three Virtues, Faith, Hope and Charity, tell Dante that he is neglecting other important things in his rapt delight at seeing Beatrice. Thereupon he recovers from the dazzling effect of her presence and sees that;

the glorious procession had wheeled upon its right flank, and was returning with the sun and the seven candlesticks in its face.

Presently the Virtues, three in one, and four in the other group, return to their stations beside the wheels of the chariot,

and the Griffon moved his holy burden, but so carefully that not a feather of him shook. The fair

lady[1] who had drawn me through the stream, and Statius, and I, followed at the right wheel. Thus, we made our progress through that high forest, empty of people because of her who trusted to the serpent, the song of angels being music for our march.

They have advanced but a short way when,

Beatrice descended,[2] and I heard all, complaining, murmur,[3] "Adam!" Then they circled about a tree[4] whose every bough was stripped of flower and leaf.

Then the saints declare the Griffon blessed because he does not strip off the bark, or taste of the tree, which, sweet to the lips, brings suffering later on. To this declaration the Griffon answers:

"It is so, that the seed of all righteousness must be preserved."

And, turning to the pole by which he had drawn the chariot, he dragged it to the foot of the bare tree, and there fastened, what was the same as itself.[5]

[1] Matilda.
[2] From the chariot. The act signifies obedience, the opposite of Eve's procedure.
[3] Because of the results of his disobedience, sin came into the world.
[4] The Tree of Knowledge.
[5] The pole was wood like the tree, and, according to an ancient legend, the Cross was made out of it.

As the trees of Earth in spring begin to swell, and each takes on its natural tinge, so did this tree, whose branches had been bare, bud forth and take on a color that was paler than roses but deeper than violets. I did not understand, nor on Earth is sung, the hymn which that assembly then chanted, nor could I catch the melody to its close.

For this reason Dante falls asleep. Later he is waked by a dazzling light, and voices that call:

"Arise, what is this that you are doing?"

As when Peter, and John, and James, taken to behold the Transfiguration, fell asleep, and were aroused at the word by which infinitely more profound slumbers have been broken,[6] saw their company lessened by the departure of Moses and Elias, and their Master's raiment changed,[7] so did I come to myself, and see standing over me that compassionate lady[8] who had guided my steps along the margin of the stream. Utterly confused, I said:

"Where is Beatrice?"

And she:

"Behold her under the new leaves, sitting at the root of the tree. Behold the company that encircles her while the others, with song of sweeter tone and deeper meaning, go on high, following the Griffon.

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[6] The word of Christ waking the dead to life.
[7] Matthew xvii:1-8.
[8] Matilda.

"In this forest you shall dwell but little while, but eternally with me shall you be a citizen of that Rome of which Christ is a Roman. Therefore, for the sake of the world, the ways of which are evil, keep your eyes fixed on the chariot; and mind you write what you see when you shall have returned to Earth."

Beatrice said these words, and I who held her commands in reverence, gave mind and eye to that which she designated. I saw Jove's bird swoop down through the tree, tearing off bark, flowers and leaves. He struck the chariot with all his might. It reeled like a ship in a gale, driven now to starboard, now to port, by the waves.[9] Then I saw a she fox, lean for want of good food, leap into the triumphal car, but, rebuking her for her ugly sins, my lady put her to such flight as her fleshless bones would allow.[10] Then I saw the Eagle, as he had before, come down into the chariot and leave it covered with his feathers. And from Heaven there came such a voice as issues from a sore-grieved heart, and said:

"O my little ship, with what an evil cargo are you laden!"[11]

Then I thought that the ground yawned between

[9] This signifies the persecution of the early Church by the emperors.

[10] Beatrice as the symbol of theology, the knowledge of divine things, puts heresy, the fox, to rout.

[11] This refers to the Emperor Constantine's supposed donation, or the endowing of the Church with worldly possessions.

the wheels, and that a dragon came forth and thrust his tail upward through the chariot, and that he drew back his tail, as a wasp his sting, and that he tore off part of the floor and went his evil way.[12] What was left of the chariot, as good Earth with grass, covered itself with new feathers, given perchance with holy and well-meant purpose. Both the wheels and the pole were covered in less time than it takes a sigh to pass the lips.[13] Thus transformed, the sacred structure grew heads on all its parts, three on the pole, and one on each corner. The former had horns like oxen, but the four had each a single horn upon the forehead.[14] Such a monster was never seen before. Secure as a citadel on some lofty mountain, there appeared, sitting on the chariot, a disheveled harlot,[15] fierce and brazen. And as if to guard against her being taken from him, I saw a giant standing at her side, and now and then they kissed each other. But, because she cast her wanton, roving eye on me, that savage and unlawful lover scourged her from head to foot.[16] Then, full

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[12] This probably refers to a schism of the Church in the ninth century.

[13] The refeathering means the increase of donations which were made to the Church, perhaps well meant; i. e., for the good of the Church, and not for selfish or ulterior ends.

[14] These heads signify the deadly sins, Pride, Envy, Anger, on the pole, and Sloth, Avarice, Gluttony and Lust at the corners, their development and growth being due to the wealth and worldly power which the Church had acquired.

[15] Revelation xviii:3. The imagery throughout this remarkable figurative history of the Church is taken from the same source.

[16] The harlot means the Pope, and the giant the king of

of jealousy, and mad with rage, he loosed the monster, and dragged it so far into the wood that the forest itself shielded me from the harlot, and this newly created beast.[17]

CANTO XXXIII

This canto opens with a splendid lament over the outrages which the Church on Earth is suffering at the hands of temporal monarchs. Beatrice prophesies about the restoration of the Empire, and then follows that lovely passage describing Dante's going through Eunoë, and being cleansed alike of sin, and of the memory of sin, and so at last prepared to enter Heaven. The canto closes Purgatory with the same quiet as that with which Hell closes, and the final word here, as in Hell, is *"stelle,"* stars. It is no vain image, that which calls *The Divine Comedy* a "starry pointing pyramid."

"O God, the heathen are come,"[1] the ladies began, phon and antiphon, now the three, now the four, this sweet anthem with tears: and Beatrice, sighing and compassionate, listened to them with a countenance but little less changed than Mary's as

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France, referring probably to the French jealousy of any influence with the Papacy save its own.

[17] Dragging the chariot, now become a beast, away from the tree to which the Griffon had left it tethered, may mean the removal of the Papacy from Rome to Avignon, in 1305.

[1] The seven Virtues (the ladies) sing the whole of the seventy-ninth Psalm of which this line is the beginning.

she stood beside the cross. But when the other virgins made way for her to speak, risen erect she answered, red as fire:

" 'A little while, and ye shall not see me:' my beloved Sisters, 'and again, a little while, and ye shall see me.' "[2]

Then she sent the seven on before, and by the merest gesture, made me, and the Lady Matilda, and Statius, who still remained, know that we were to follow her. Thus she moved forward, and I do not think that she had taken her tenth step, when she turned her eyes full on mine and said, with countenance serene:

"Come more forward, so that if I speak to you, you may be where you can hear."

So soon as I was at her side as I should be, she said to me:

"Brother, why do you not dare to ask questions of me, now that you are with me?"

Dante replies to Beatrice that she knows what he wishes to be told, and what he should be told. Thereupon she begins to explain the significance of what he has just seen.

"Know that the vessel which the serpent broke,

[2] John xvi:16. Beatrice, crimson with indignation over the abuses of the Church, signified by the Psalm which she has heard, answers with these words, which are meant in part as prophecy, and part as an inspiration for the return of the Papacy to Rome.

was, and is not,[3] but let him whose fault it is be sure that the vengeance of God is not to be put off by any sop. The Eagle that left its feathers on the car, whereby it became a monster, and later a prey,[4] shall not be forever without an heir, for I see clearly, and beyond doubt the stars tell it, a time when, secure against every obstacle and hindrance, those sent by God shall slay the harlot and the giant who is sinning with her. Mark well, and as my words were uttered, tell them, to those who are in that life which is a race unto death. And when you write them down, remember not to hide the plight in which you saw the tree which has been twice despoiled.[5] Whoever robs or breaks it, with blasphemous act offends God, Who, and for His own use, created it holy."

The time approaches noon and Dante says that,

The seven ladies stopped on the edge of a pale shadow such as high mountains throw across icy streams flowing beneath dark green needles and black boughs. In front of them it seemed to me that I saw Euphrates and Tigris issuing from one source, and, like friends, depart slowly from each other.

"O Light, O Glory of the human race, what is

[3] The chariot. "The beast that thou sawest was, and is not." Revelation xvii:8.

[4] Of the giant.

[5] Once by Adam, and once by the giant.

this water which here gushes forth from one spring, and then divides itself in two?"

To my petition came the answer:

"Pray, Matilda, tell it you."

At this, that beautiful lady, like one who frees himself of blame, replied:

"This and other things have I told him, and I am sure that the waters of Lethe have not washed them from his memory."

And Beatrice:

"It may be that some heavier care, which oftentimes destroys the memory, has clouded his inner vision. But behold Eunoë which yonder gushes forth; as is your custom lead him to it, and revive his failing powers."

Like a gentle soul which offers no excuse, but makes another's will its own as soon as ever that will is manifest, the lovely lady[6] put her hand upon me, moved forward, and to Statius, with the courtesy of high breeding, said: "Come with him."

If, Reader, I had more space for writing, I would, in part at least, sing of that sweet draught which never could have sated me. But in as much as all the leaves allotted to this second canticle are now full, the limits of my art forbid me to go farther.

From that most sacred water I came forth, renewed, as trees with spring foliage, purified, and fit to mount unto the stars.

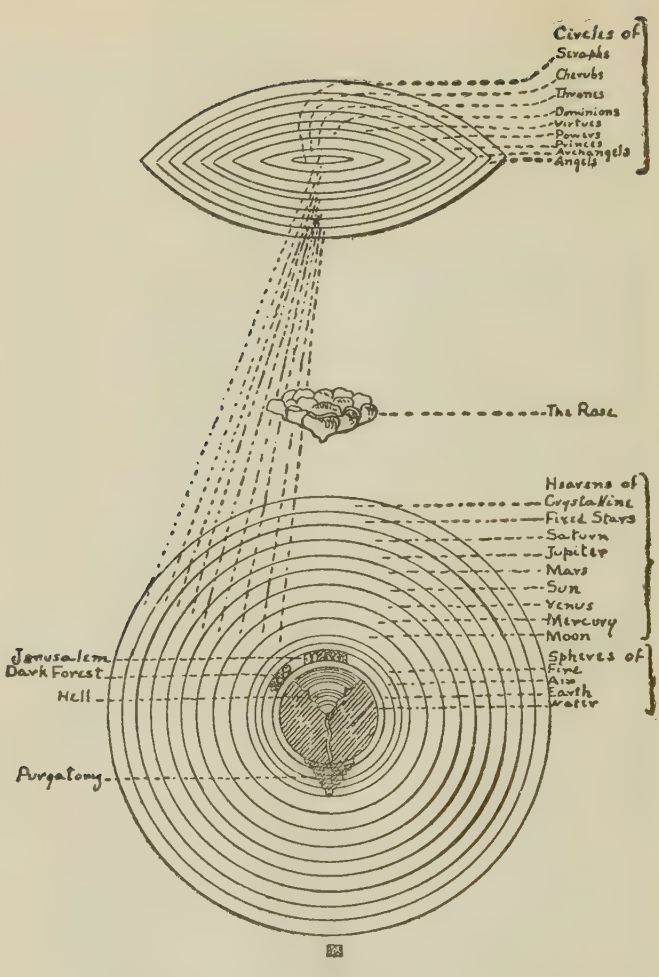
[6] Matilda.

PARADISE

CANTO I

DANTE brings his trilogy to a close with Paradise, and therein describes the best that he knows of this world, woman, transfigured; and, so far as very wonderful words will allow, God. Godhead, and perfect humanity,—creature, and condition, both unknowable, yet believed in by numberless men, Dante manages to make seem real. In one place he says we attribute hands and feet to God and mean something else. And so do we all, even when we "belittle Him with sex." Nor are saints much easier to conceive of and to understand; yet they, too, in Dante's Paradise, are made convincing. So likewise is the place itself, which eye has not seen, as Dante pictures it in the thirty-three cantos of his third canticle.

Feeling, beauty, reason, of themselves intense, and molten into a perfect harmony, together with light, sound, fragrance and motion, are the materials out of which the poet has woven the lovely web of words for which praise borders upon impertinence. But what must those thoughts have


Circles of
Seraphs
Cherubs
Thrones
Dominions
Virtues
Powers
Princes
Archangels
Angels
The Rose
Heavens of
Crystalline
Fixed Stars
Saturn
Jupiter
Mars
Sun
Venus
Mercury
Moon
Spheres of
Fire
Air
Earth
Water
Jerusalem
Dark Forest
Hell
Purgatory

PARADISE

been like, which filled Dante's head, and heart, if we believe, with Shelley, that, "when composition begins, inspiration is already on the decline, and the most glorious poetry that has ever been communicated to the world is probably a feeble shadow of the original conceptions of the poet"! On one hand, as the Paradise advances, he must be little interested in words, and all of power they may hold, who does not realize that he is in the presence of a master of the "just shades of language." On the other, and vastly more important hand, he must be hard of heart, as he reads on, who does not read anew the vital meaning of Wordsworth's lines:

> "In such access of mind, in such high hour
> Of visitation from the living God
> Thought was not; in enjoyment it expired."

And finally, it is as fortunate, as it is blessed, for the man for whom "verses" really are "as spells which unseal the inmost enchanted fountains of delight which is the grief of love. It is impossible to feel them without becoming a portion of that beauty which we contemplate."

The glory of Him who moves all things penetrates the whole universe and shines in one part more, and in another less. I have been in that Heaven which receives the most of His light, and therein I saw things which he who returns to Earth has neither the knowledge nor the power to tell, be-

cause, as our soul draws near to the attainment of its utmost desire, which is to behold God, understanding becomes so profound that memory can not keep pace with it. So much, however, of the blessed realm as my mind retains shall now become the subject of my song.

O supreme Apollo, for this last effort grant me such strength as you require of him who is to win the much loved laurel. Thus far one summit of Parnassus has sufficed me, but I need the help of both[1] for my remaining labor. Enter into my heart and make me such as you yourself were in the contest with Marsyas.[2] O divine Power, if you but grant me so much of your spirit as will enable me to draw the picture of the Blessed Realm, as it is now stamped upon my mind, you shall see me approach your chosen laurel and crown myself with those leaves for which my subject and you have made me worthy. So seldom, Father, are they plucked, for triumph of Cæsar, or of poet, fault and shame of human choosing, that the Peneian leaf ought to bring gladness to the joyous Delphic god whenever poetry makes any man want to be crowned with it. Great flame may follow a little spark; after me per-

[1] Parnassus had two peaks, one the Muses'; the other, Apollo's. Dante beseeches the Muses to aid him in singing of Hell and Purgatory, but for his Paradise he calls on Apollo as well.

[2] Capable of victory as Apollo was when he overcame Marsyas.

haps some one will pray a prayer more worthy Cyrrha's[3] granting.

After these opening passages, one, a sort of proem, in which Dante tells us what his subject is to be, and the other, a solemn invocation to Apollo and the Muses, he continues with an account of his own transhumanizing whereby he became such a being as can ascend through the spheres. And this is what he now does, with Beatrice for guide. The hour is noon, and the season is spring, Easter but short time past. He entered Hell at sundown, and Purgatory at dawn, least, and most hopeful, hours of the twenty-four. But "sacred, high, eternal noon," what Dante has himself described as "the noblest hour of all the day," he chooses for the ascent into glory.

I saw Beatrice gazing upon the sun. Never did eagle so fix himself upon it. And all at once day seemed to be added unto day, as if He who has the power had adorned the heavens with a second sun.

In this passage Dante rises above himself as every man, and most of all men, a poet, must, when in the practise of any one of the beautiful arts he takes the last step in the *gradus ad Parnassum*. He makes

[3] Cyrrha, a city dedicated to Apollo, and situated near the foot of Parnassus.

the impossible seem possible, and thereby makes his approach into Paradise seem real. He presents an inconceivable thing in such a guise that it becomes conceivable. No man ever came closer to describing what eye hath not seen nor ear heard. Wordsworth came just as close when, in the sixth book of *The Prelude,* he also took the last step in the ascent of Parnassus, and wrote the lines:

> ". . . a joy
> Above all joys, that seemed another morn
> Risen on midnoon;"

Beatrice was standing, her gaze entirely centered on the eternal spheres, and I, with mine, wholly upon her. Looking at her I was transformed as Glaucus was at the time when he tasted the herb that changed him into a god. The change from an earthly to a heavenly body can not be described in words; the example of Glaucus must satisfy him for whom Divine Grace holds such experience in store. If I were nought but living soul, which is the last part of man created, O Love that governs Heaven, well do You know that it was Your light, shining through the eyes of Beatrice, which carried me on high. When that ceaseless turning, which the heavenly spheres got from You, because of their desire for You, attracted me by its harmony, which is of your tuning and composing, to my eyes the whole celestial realm appeared to be one vast sea of flame, fired by the sun.

The unknown quality of this harmony, and the fierceness of this light, gave me such thirst for knowledge as I had never before experienced. Because of which, Beatrice, who saw me as I see myself, began to answer even before my lips had formed the question. She said:

"You cloud your understanding with false fancies, so that you do not comprehend what you would comprehend, had you rid your mind of them. You are no longer on Earth, as you imagine, but lightning never made such haste, as you, to return."

Dante, satisfied with this explanation of the amazing light and the marvelous harmony, immediately demands to know how he, in his solid flesh, has managed to transcend the light air, at which, he tells us that Beatrice,

sighing for pity, turned her eyes upon me with the expression which comes over a mother's face as she watches her child in the delirium of fever.

Then follows a difficult explanation, half scientific, half philosophical, and by no means satisfactory, the essence of which is that God has willed a miracle. The final words are as notable as they are persuasive in their simple loveliness.

"You should not, if I am right, feel more wonder at your ascent, than at the down-flowing of a stream

from the top to the bottom of a mountain. The wonder would be, if, deprived as you now are of the hindrance of sin, you had remained below on Earth, a thing that would be as strange as perfect quiet in fire."

And herewith she turned her face once more upon the spheres.

CANTO II

The Heaven of the Moon. This canto opens with a brief proem of its own. In it Dante likens a man of small learning and imagination to a little vessel, warning all such that, while a boat of this size is good enough for Hell and Purgatory, i. e., to sail them, seas of troublous meaning, it is no proper craft for navigating the depths of meaning in his Paradise. Even following in the wake of a large ship, i. e., of one learned in matters of theology and philosophy, the course may easily be lost by, or become impossible for, the little bark, and shipwreck result.

O you who in a little boat, anxious to listen, have followed my ship, that singing pushes on, now ought you to reverse your course, and return to your own shores. Put not out upon the high sea, because, should you lose me, you would never find your course again. The ocean which I sail was never

ploughed by keel.[1] Minerva fills my sails, Apollo steers, and the nine Muses give me my bearings.[2]

You other few who have already reached out for the bread of angels, which is heavenly knowledge,—in this realm the bread by which one lives, and by which one never can be surfeited,—for your vessel the deep sea is safe, provided you keep so close upon my wake that you do not lose the course. Those glorious sailors who crossed to Colchis were not so dumfounded when they saw Jason turn ploughman, as you shall be.

Beatrice was gazing upward, and my eyes were fixed on her, when, in such time, perchance, as it takes an arrow to fly from the notch, I realized that I had reached a place where a marvelous thing riveted my sight. Whereupon she, from whom no thought of mine could be hid, turning toward me, glad as lovely, said:

"Uplift your grateful thoughts to God, through Whom we have reached the first star."[3]

It seemed to me that a cloud, brilliant, impenetrable, solid and smooth, had engulfed us; a cloud, like to a diamond on which the sun strikes. Into

[1] Dante means that what is to follow is no reading for men of little education or any one not addicted to serious thinking. He is in fact saying of himself much the same thing that Goethe said about Michelangelo's voyaging the vast abysses of thought alone.

[2] Minerva is knowledge, and Apollo, God of song, is guide, and the Muses are inspiration, by the aid of all of whom Dante was enabled to write his Paradise.

[3] The Heaven of the Moon.

itself this eternal pearl received us, precisely as water receives a ray of light, yet remains undivided.

This is the first of the nine concentric spheres which, in everlasting gyrations, whirl about the Earth as a center. It is the lowest, least important, and nearest to the Earth, of all the Heavens, and derives its motion from the least important of the nine orders of hierarchies, the angels, which move in everlasting circles around God. The first stage of Dante's journey through the Heavens, the subject of his Paradise, ends here in the sphere of the moon.

CANTO III

This extremely beautiful canto, so quiet, and calm, and sweet, is filled to overflowing with the spirit of content; the spirit and essence of life eternal in Paradise, as thought of, and longed for, by devout and faithful Christians in the thirteenth, no less than in the twentieth century. It is the peace which passeth understanding, brought by Dante "into the compass of distinct regard," to do which is within the reach of the greatest artist alone.

In a letter to his wife, written in 1844, Gladstone quotes the famous line: *"In la sua volantade e nostra pace"*[1] (In His desire is our peace), and adds: "The words are few and simple, and yet they appear

[1] See page 274.

to me to have an inexpressible majesty of truth about them, to be almost as if they were spoken from the very mouth of God."

No more accurate phrase could be written of this third canto than to say of it, that it has "an inexpressible majesty of truth" about every line of it. The sphere of the moon, and they that dwell therein, together form the subject.

As in perfect mirrors, or in transparent and tranquil water, not deep enough to conceal the bottom, the features of our faces are reflected so faintly, that a pearl on a white brow is not more noticeable, in like manner did I see many faces, all eager to speak; whereat I made the opposite mistake to that which begot love between the man and the fountain.[2]

The moment that I became aware of these faces, assuming that they were reflections, I turned around in order to see the realities, and saw nothing. Then I turned back, and directed my gaze straight into those depths of light which, all smiling, were aglow in the blessed eyes of my sweet guide.[3]

"Marvel not," she said, "that I smile at your

[2] Narcissus took his own reflection to be a real person and thereupon fell in love with it. Dante makes the opposite error of thinking the faces reflections of persons standing behind him, when really they are shades come from their dwelling place in the Empyrean Heaven to talk with him here in the sphere of the moon.

[3] It must be borne constantly in mind that Beatrice is now Dante's guide.

childish ideas, which do not yet confidently rest upon the truth, but, as such ideas always do, get you nowhere. These whom you see are real persons, placed here for failing to keep their vows. Speak with them, listen to them, and believe, because that True Light, which gives them peace, does not permit them to turn from it."

I turned to the shade that seemed keenest to talk, and began, like a man who stumbles because of his own great eagerness:

"O spirit sure of Paradise, who even in the brightness of eternal life art tasting that sweetness which, unless it is tasted, can never be known, do me the transcendent favor of satisfying my wish to know your name and lot."

To this, with smiling eyes, she quickly answered:

"Our charity does not close its doors upon a just wish any more than the love of God Himself, Who wills that all his court be like Himself. On Earth I was a nun; and if your memory runs back clearly, my being more beautiful now than then, will not prevent your recognizing me; you will see that I am Piccarda, who, placed here with these other blessed ones, am blest in the slowest sphere.[4] Our desires, which are fired only by that which is pleasing to the

[4] The sphere of the moon, which, being nearest to the Earth and farthest from God, revolves least rapidly of all the spheres, and is, of all of them, least blest. Piccarda Donati, sister of Forese (see Purgatory, Canto XXIV), and a relative of Dante's wife.

Holy Spirit, have their blessedness in being placed in accord with His ordering. And this allotted position, which appears so lowly, is given to us because our vows were neglected and in some respect unfilled."

To this I replied: "In your glorified faces there is something divine, I understand it not, which makes you different from what you were. This is why I did not remember you at once, but what you say helps me now to recognize you more easily. Tell me, you that are happy here, do you wish for a more exalted place, in order to see more, or to make more friends?"

Along with the other shades she first smiled a little, then answered so gladly that she seemed to blaze with the fire of love.

"Brother, the effect of love is to make our wills content. It causes us to desire only that which we have, and does not spur our longing for anything else. If we wanted to be higher up, our desires would be out of harmony with the will of Him who assigns us to this level, which discord you will see to be impossible in these spheres, if abiding in love is here a necessity, and if you carefully consider the nature of that necessity.[5] Nay, rather, it is the essence of this blessed state to exist in perfect concord with the divine will, so that God's will and ours are thus made one. Hence, the way in which we are

[5] Love.

distributed from low to high throughout this realm, to the entire realm gives satisfaction, even as it does to the King who makes perfect unison of His and our ends. His will is our peace; it is that sea toward which all things move whether created by God or made by nature."[6]

Then I saw clearly how everywhere in Heaven is Paradise, even though the grace of the Supreme Good is not poured down equally in every part.

Dante now begs Piccarda to tell him how it came about that her vow was defective.

"A young girl I fled from the world in order to follow Saint Clara,[7] and I put on the veil, and pledged myself to the rule of her Order. Later, men more given to evil than good, tore me from the peaceful cloister, and what my life became after this, God knows."

CANTO IV

Beatrice continues to discuss the subject of vows in answer to questions which Dante puts to her, one after the other, until the end of the canto. He says:

[6] God created the angels and intellectual powers directly, or at first hand; that part of the universe which is pure spirit. The balance, made up of spirit and matter, is here attributed to nature, which was thought of as His handmaid. In this case nature means the influence of the stars, an agent, so to speak, which intervenes, as it were, between God and that part of the universe which is material.

[7] St. Clara, a friend of St. Francis, founded an order of nuns.

"I want to know if man can atone for broken vows, by good works, which may have an equivalent weight in Heaven's scales?"

The answer to this question, given in simple words of great eloquence, comes in Canto V. It is this canto also which contains the ascent to the next Heaven, or sphere, that of Mercury.

CANTO V

BEATRICE

"You wish to know if for an unfulfilled vow enough can be paid in other service, to secure the soul against claim."[1]

So she began, and, like one who does not cease his speaking, she thus continued her holy discourse:[2]

"The greatest gift which God in His bounty granted at creation, and the one most in accord with His own goodness, and the one by which He sets the greatest store, was the freedom of the will, with which the creatures that have intelligence,[3] they all, and they alone, were, and are endowed. Now, if you found your argument on this, the precious char-

[1] The claim of heavenly justice against one who has sinned.

[2] This passage, dealing in part with the freedom of the will, is of peculiar interest because it lays down clearly the main principle, the cornerstone in the structure of Dante's religion and philosophy.

[3] Men and angels.

acter of a vow will be evident to you, provided it is such that God accepts it when you make it. Because, in confirming the compact between God and man, sacrifice is made of this treasure[4] which I have just described, and that sacrifice is its own act. What then can be offered in compensation? If you think to turn to a good use for other ends, that vow which you have offered to God for a definite purpose, you are setting out to do good works with ill-gotten gains.

"Let no man lightly make a vow: be faithful, but not obstinate in being so, as Jephthah[5] was in his first offering; he to whom it would have been more credit to say: 'I have done wrong,' than, by keeping his vow, to do greater wrong. And equally foolish will you see the great leader[6] of the Greeks to have been, on account of whom Iphigenia was made to suffer because of her fair face, and, both the simple and the wise, who have since heard of the monstrous sacrifice, to grieve. Let Christians take more thought before they make vows; be not like a feather to every wind; think not that every water can wash you.[7] You have the Old and the New Testament, and the Shepherd of the Church to guide you: let

[4] Freedom of the will.
[5] Judges xi:30-39.
[6] Agamemnon vowed to sacrifice to Diana the loveliest thing born during the year, and this thing proved to be his daughter, Iphigenia.
[7] He means that the sin of a broken vow can not be easily cleansed away.

this suffice for your salvation. If unrighteous greed urges you to a different course, act like men, and not like silly sheep, so that the Jew among you may not have the laugh on you.[8] Act not like the lamb that leaves its mother's milk, and, innocent and playful, works its own destruction."

Word for word, as I have written, did Beatrice speak to me; then, all eagerness, she again lifted her gaze to the Empyrean. Her silence, and the change which had come over her countenance, imposed silence on my thirsty mind which already had more questions to be answered. Therewith, as an arrow hits the mark before the bowstring has ceased to quiver, we sped on into the second realm.[9]

CANTO VI

On entering the Heaven of Mercury Dante beholds "more than a thousand glorious lights drawing toward him," and from each he hears an exclamation of joy at his coming, "which shall increase our loves," meaning that every added soul in Paradise is an additional object on which the citizens of Heaven may exercise their love, love being a quality that is strengthened, like muscles or memory, by

[8] The Jews, who live by the Old Testament alone, keep their vows. If you who have more light, i. e., Christians, make religious vows, for selfish ends, and break them, then you will be despised by the Jews.

[9] The Heaven of Mercury.

exercise. The divine effulgence makes it plain that any questions Dante may care to ask will be answered gladly, and Beatrice confirms this by saying:

"Speak, speak securely, and trust even as to gods."

Immediately the spirit of Justinian, the emperor, his features showing plainly, appears in the light that first bade Dante ask what he would. Out of his mouth then comes the history of the Roman Empire from Æneas to the time of Dante, a piece of writing in itself magnificent enough to suit so magnificent a subject, prefaced by a bit of glorious humility on the part of Justinian who declares that in Heaven *what* you were alone counts, not *who* you were; in a word, that all earthly distinctions are wiped out. If there is such a thing as epic history, and why should there not be such a thing, surely here is an example. The very words march like triumphant legions; the ideas move forward with imperial grandeur; the impact of meaning in the whole is as the very essence of victory.

"After Constantine turned the Eagle counter to the course of the heavens,[1] which it had followed in

[1] Constantine carried the Imperial Eagle eastward, and set it up, i. e., established the Imperial capitol, on the Bosphorus. The march of Empire previously had been westward. This was in 324 A. D. and Justinian, who is speaking, did not ascend the throne until 527.

the steps of him of old who took Lavinia to wife,[2] for two centuries and more did that bird of God hover over the frontiers of Europe, close by the mountains of Troy, whence it had originally winged its flight. From that place it governed the world, beneath the shadow of its sacred wings, from one imperial hand to another, until at last it lighted upon mine. Cæsar I was, and am Justinian, who, inspired by the Holy Spirit, purged the laws of those that were superfluous and useless. Prior to the time I undertook this work, I believed that there was but one nature in Christ, not more,[3] and with that belief I was satisfied, but the blessed Agapetus, who was the supreme shepherd,[4] by his words led me to the true faith. I believed him; and that which his belief held I now see as clearly as you see that of two contradictory assertions one must be false and the other true. As soon as I moved in accord with the Church, it pleased God, in His grace, to inspire me to undertake the exalted labor,[5] and I gave myself unreservedly to it. Military concerns I entrusted to my Belisarius with whom the right hand of Heaven was so completely joined as to make it evident that I need have no further care."

Thus far Justinian has occupied himself with tell-

[2] Æneas, father of the Roman people.
[3] The divine nature, and the human, in Christ, i. e., Christ as God, and as man.
[4] The Pope.
[5] Justinian's famous codification of the Roman law.

ing his own history. Now he turns his attention to narrating the history of the Empire, and discoursing on the sin that is committed when a human being either attempts to usurp the power of the Empire, seize its ensign, the Eagle, for his own ends, or make war against it, which things Dante saw attempted, on all sides, by the politicians of his own time.

Justinian begins the story with the day,

when Pallas[6] died in order to give the Eagle a kingdom.

"You know how it dwelt in Alba for three hundred years and more until finally, for its sake, the three fought against the three.[7] You know what it accomplished under its seven kings, subduing the neighboring tribes, from the time when the Sabine women were outraged, down to the woe of Lucretia. You know what it achieved when those illustrious Romans bore it against Brennus, Pyrrhus, and the other princes and allies, because of which Torquatus, and Quinctius, who was named from his curly hair, the Decii and the Fabii won the fame which I rejoice to immortalize. Low in the dust it laid the pride of the Carthaginians, who, under leadership of Hannibal, crossed the Alpine peaks whence flows the Po. Scipio and Pompey in their youth were victorious under it, and bitter did it

[6] Son of the King of Latium, sent to aid Æneas.
[7] The Horatii and Curatii.

prove to that hill[8] at whose foot you first saw the light. Then, close on the time when it was the will of Heaven that all the world should be at peace like itself,[9] Cæsar, at Rome's behest, assumed it,[10] and what it then did from the Var to the Rhine, the Isère witnessed and the Saône, and the Seine, and every valley which helps fill the Rhone. The deeds it wrought when it went forth from Ravenna, and crossed the Rubicon were so rapid that neither tongue nor pen could follow. On Spain it wheeled its legions; then toward Durazzo, and smote Pharsalia so that the blow was felt as far as the warm Nile. Once more it looked on Antandros,[11] and the Simois, whence it had first set forth, and where Hector lies, and evil for Ptolemy proved the hour of its arousing. Thence it swooped swiftly down on Juba, and after that returned to your west[12] where it heard the Pompeian trumpets.[13] Of what it

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[8] Dante was born in Florence, which lies under the hill of Fiesole, on which, tradition says, Cataline's army had headquarters. The Romans destroyed the town of Fiesole.

[9] The universal peace at the coming of Christ.

> "No war, or battail's sound
> Was heard the world around;"
> Milton, *Ode on Nativity.*

[10] It, here, as throughout this entire passage, refers to the Eagle as ensign of the Roman state.

[11] The place where Æneas set sail when he left his native land for Italy.

[12] Justinian speaking in Paradise to Dante, who still belongs to the world, says "your west," meaning, west as thought of on Earth.

[13] Cæsar defeated the sons of Pompey in Spain.

accomplished under its next standard bearer[14] Brutus and Cassius still bear testimony in Hell. Because of it the ill-fated Cleopatra still suffers, she, who fleeing it, sought for herself terrible and sudden death from the asp. With him[15] it flew far even as the Red Sea; with him[15] it set the world in such perfect peace that the temple of Janus was closed.

"But what the ensign, of which I speak, had already done, and later was to do, throughout the world, will dwindle in appearance and seem insignificant if one contemplates it with single eye and pure heart, as it was in the hand of the third Cæsar;[16] for the Justice of God which inspires me, granted to it, in the hand of him of whom I speak, the glory of doing vengeance for Its own wrath. Mark now the marvel of what I shall unfold. With Titus it made haste to do vengeance for the vengeance of original sin.[17]

"And when the Lombards attacked the Holy Church, under the Eagle, Charlemagne victoriously came to her aid."

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[14] Augustus.

[15] Augustus.

[16] Tiberius, during whose reign Christ was crucified. Previous to this time the Roman Eagle had exercised its influence for worldly supremacy only. After this time it was destined to exert itself in behalf of Heaven, i. e., destroy Jerusalem and avenge the Crucifixion, as it did under Titus.

[17] First Rome, under its ensign, the Eagle, avenged the wrath of God against Adam, by putting Christ to death, and secondly, it avenged the Jews, who crucified Him, by destroying Jerusalem.

Justinian now speaks of the despicable way in which political factions, and even individuals—this, in times subsequent to Charlemagne (800 A. D.), and down to Dante's own day—oppose, or appropriate, the eagle for personal or party ends. But, says Justinian, in solemn warning:

"Let such an one fear the talons which have torn the hide from a mightier lion. Many a time ere now have the sons wept for the sins of the father; let him not imagine that God will change this ensign for his lilies."[18]

CANTO VII

From this point in their heavenly pilgrimage—Dante and Beatrice, be it remembered, are still in the second sphere, that of Mercury, the second lowest of the Heavens—from this point, upward, the shades or spirits appear as lights, which blaze forth their own glory, each according to his own degree of virtue, and, moving more or less rapidly,

[18] Dante refers to Charles II, King of Naples. He declares that God will not change the emblem of the Roman Empire which He has chosen to be his instrument for governing the world, for the lilies, which form the emblem of the French house of Anjou, of which house Charles was a son.

The many historical references made in the above selection from Canto VI can be easily understood by referring to any text-book on Roman History.

alone or in groups, form patterns. These movements are made to diverse music. Beauty of light, loveliness of sound, movement, all so characteristic of life, constitute what might be termed the physical, though impalpable, realities of the heavenly spheres, and their blessed inhabitants. For analogy among things of human origin I know of nothing closer than fine fireworks, individual balls and stars of flame, and what are known as "set-pieces," accompanied by music. But let him who finds any help in such a faulty analogy remember that what Dante saw with his mind's eye, nay, with his very soul's eye, is as far removed from this mundane analogy as Heaven is high above Earth—but, so remembering, the definite picture of the human thing may be made the path of imaginative understanding to the divine, for, whether talking or thinking of another world, man has nought but the tangible present, and its vocabulary of ideas and words, with which to speak, or in which to conceive of the surpassing glories of what is beyond this mortal Earth. Even "John to the seven churches which are in Asia," could do no more. The essence of mystery consists in what is not demonstrable, and mystery is a prime quality of all great art, most of all the art of poetry, which poetry is only great when it has the power to "spring imagination." Mystery, and the Paradise of Dante, are synonymous. Nei-

ther one nor the other can ever be acceptable either to a grossly, or a finely materialistic reader. Love of beauty, whether of divine or human making, and love of art, of which poetry is the most precious witness, love of the sort which begets appreciation, always implies a veritable "act of faith." But, as faith without works does not seem to be sufficient in our daily course through life, so in poetry, imagination can not have provable existence without a material body of words and demonstrable ideas.

All of which, before now, more than once emphasized in these pages, is said again to impress upon the reader of Dante, preeminently the reader of his Paradise, this fact—that the sole way of entering into a spiritual understanding of his peculiar greatness is to bear constantly in mind, as he did, the actual conditions of human life in the daily round of ordinary existence upon Earth. Finally, remember that the lovely lights, the lovely sounds, and the rapid movements in the higher spheres mean something more than the mere terms imply, which something more is no less than the state of the just after death. "The holy Jerusalem descending out of Heaven from God—like a jasper stone, clear as crystal," through the definite material meaning of the words conveys something beyond material meaning; mystery, what we will, provided only that we recognize in this something more, the sole and only

real value which pertains to these and all other inspired words.

"Hosanna! Holy Lord God of Sabaoth, illuming the blessed fires of these realms with Thy brightness from on high," were the words, tuned to an accompaniment that came from the double light[1] which was Justinian; and it, and the other lights, moved in their dance, and, like swiftest sparks, hid themselves from me in sudden distance.[2]

The canto closes with an argument for the Resurrection. Beatrice says to Dante:

"You say: 'I see the water, I see the air, the fire, and the Earth, they, and all combinations of them, that they are corruptible and endure little while. Yet are they created things.' Consequently if what I have said before is true, they ought to be incorruptible. My brother, of the angels, and this pure Heaven in which you are, it may alone be said that they were brought into being, created, in their entirety, and as they now stand. But the elements which you name, and those things which are made of them, were brought into being by a secondary

[1] Justinian is spoken of as a double light because of his twofold function of Emperor and Legislator.

[2] They have returned to the Empyrean, their real dwelling place, having come to the sphere of Mercury in order to show themselves to Dante, and discourse with him. Justinian, in the moment of his departure from Dante, bursts forth with a hymn to God. The saints that are with him take up the refrain.

power.[3] Supreme Goodness inspires your existence,[4] and so completely endows it with love for Itself that from thenceforth its heart is set on It. And from this you may likewise draw an argument for your resurrection, if you but recall how human flesh was made, when both our first parents were created."[5]

CANTO VIII

We now come to the third Heaven, that of Venus, and the spirits of lovers. Here are more lights, but no faces revealed. The lights are all in motion. Dante heard sung from within their depths:

"Hosanna," with such sweetness that I have never since ceased wishing to hear it again. Then one of them drew near and said:

"Every one of us is ready to do whatever pleases you, in order to give you joy. In the same circular course, with the same circling motion, and with the

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[3] This means that the elements, and all that they imply, were created by the power of the angelic Intelligences, which Intelligences were in turn created direct by God; thus, the distinction, between created things, and all other things which, though they seem to be created, are really not so, in the sense of having been the immediate work of the Almighty. And, of course, only created things can be exempt from corruption.

[4] Human life.

[5] God created the body, as well as the soul, no second power intervening as in the case of the elements. What God created can not die. Hence may be argued the resurrection of the flesh, as well as the immortality of the soul.

same desire, do we revolve with those Princes[1] to whom, on Earth, you once addressed the verse: 'Ye whose intelligence moves the third Heaven.'[2] Good will so fills us that, in order to please you, rest will be no less sweet to us than motion."

When I had reverently lifted my eyes in question to my lady, and she had satisfied me, and given her assent, I turned them again to that light which had just promised so much; and,

"Tell us who you are," I cried with accents of intense affection.[3] Ah! how much larger and brighter I saw it grow because of the joy which my words added to its already great gladness! Thus magnified, it said to me:[4]

"Brief was the span of my days on Earth; had it been longer, much evil that is to be, had never been. My bliss, shining around me, hides me from you as the cocoon hides the silk worm. Great was the love you bore for me, and much reason had you, and, had I but remained among the living, I would have shown you not only leaves[5] but fruits of friendship."

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[1] The third rank of the nine celestial Intelligences which compose the hierarchy of Heaven.

[2] The first line of the first song in Dante's *Convivio* or Banquet, as this earlier work is called.

[3] Because of the great compliment implied by the quotation from Dante's own writing, which the light had paid him.

[4] Charles Martel, oldest son of Charles II of Anjou, king of Naples. It is commonly believed that he and Dante were friends.

[5] Leaves promise that fulfilment which is fruit.

After giving Dante a long and difficult discourse on order and variety in, and among, things mortal, Charles Martel concludes with some advice, as wise now as then, about education—to the effect that those in positions of authority, ought first of all to endeavor to find out what a youth is, by nature, fitted for; then give him instruction calculated to strengthen his natural aptitude.

CHARLES MARTEL

"And if, down yonder, your world would but give heed to the natural dispositions of men, it would produce a better race. But instead, you force upon the Church one who was born to wield a sword, and you make a king of one who was born to preach; in so doing you do not move your feet along the true way, which is the way of nature."

CANTO IX

After your Charles, O lovely Clemence,[1] had made plain to me much that I desired to know, he went on to tell me of the intrigues by which his descendants would be defrauded of their just rights; but, said he:

"Keep silence, and let the years roll on;" this

[1] Whether this Clemence was Charles Martel's wife, or sister, is uncertain.

much only can I tell you, that those who have wronged you shall lament as is their due.

And now the spirit, within that holy flame, returned to the Sun from which the fullness of its light is derived, for He is that Good which is for all things their source of light. O souls misguided, and creatures without reverence, who harden your hearts against such a Good, lifting up your heads unto vanity!

The ninth canto opens with the departure of the light of Charles, and this brief apostrophe to the heedless impiety, and vanity of human beings. It closes with a strangely, almost weirdly, sweet passage in which the troubadour poet, Folco of Marseilles, tells Dante about the light which is Rahab "the harlot" who, "by faith perished not with them that believed not." Hebrews xi: 31. Few passages in *The Comedy* argue more completely Dante's abiding faith in faith, and how it, alone, may be sufficient for salvation. This incident related, Folco speaks a few fierce lines concerning the manner in which the high priests of the Church are neglecting their duties and defiling their sacred offices; a passage of what Carlyle calls that "natural condensation spontaneous to the man. One smiting word; and then there is silence, nothing more said."

"But in order that you may go away satisfied as

to every question to which this sphere has given rise, I must needs tell you more yet. You have a wish to know who is in this light which sparkles so brilliantly, here at my side, like a sunbeam flashing on clear water. Learn then that within it, Rahab is at peace, and that her being in our ranks[2] brightens them more than any other presence. She was taken up and received into this Heaven before any other, of all the souls of the triumph of Christ.[3] Truly was it meet to set her in one of the heavenly spheres as a trophy of the magnificent victory won by the Crucifixion, because she gave aid to the first glorious exploit of Joshua[4] in the Holy Land, a thing which scarcely stirs the memory of the Pope.[5]

Your city[6] which was founded by him who first rebelled against his Maker, and whose envy[7] has caused so many tears, mints and circulates the accursed florin, which has led astray both sheep and lambs, because it has turned their shepherd into a wolf.[8] For its sake the great Doctors of the Church are neglected, and heed is given only to the De-

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[2] Lovers in the sphere of Venus.

[3] Those souls taken by Christ when He made His descent into Hell.

[4] Joshua ii:6.

[5] Boniface VIII made no effort to recover the Holy Land, and did nothing even to start a Crusade.

[6] Florence.

[7] "Through envy of the devil came death into the world." Wisdom of Solomon ii:24.

[8] The clergy, gone mad in their pursuit of gold, are become wolves.

cretals,[9] as is proved by the notes on their margins. It is these to which both Pope and Cardinals apply themselves. Their thoughts go not to Nazareth whither, in his descent, Gabriel winged his way. But the Vatican, and the other sacred places of Rome, wherein the soldiers of Peter lie buried, shall soon be delivered from this adultery."[10]

CANTO X

I was no more conscious of my ascent than is a man of his thoughts, before they come. It was Beatrice who guided me from good to better so instantaneously that the act required no time.

As regards what was in the sphere of the Sun which I had entered, distinguishable, not by color, but by increased brilliancy, I could not report so as to make any one believe me, even though I were assisted by genius, art and experience. None the less one may believe it, and, doing so, let him long to behold it. If our faculties are too frail for comprehending such sublimities, it is no wonder; for beyond the sun there was never eye could reach.

I beheld many living and surpassing lights,[1] which, taking us as a center, formed themselves into a wreath. They were even sweeter of voice, than re-

[9] Laws.

[10] This may refer to the removal, in 1305, of the Papal Court to Avignon.

[1] Brighter than the Sun in which they are.

splendent in aspect. In the heavenly court, whence I have returned to Earth, many precious and lovely things exist which can not be transported from the kingdom, and of such was the song of those lights. Let him who does not fly thither in imagination, expect tidings of that place from the dumb.

The wreath of blazing lights now circles around Beatrice and Dante; then, ceasing its dance, one of the great lights speaks to Dante; it says:

"You desire to know of what flowers this wreath is woven, which, around her, beams with delight on the beautiful lady who gives you power for the ascent of Heaven. For myself, I was a lamb of the holy flock[2] which Dominic guides along that path where all goes well with him who does not stray. This one who is nearest to me, on my right, was my brother and master. He was Albert of Cologne,[3] and I, Thomas of Aquino.[4]

Others are named, and then:

"The fifth light, which is the most beautiful among us, breathes forth so much love that all the

[2] The religious order of Dominicans.

[3] So learned that he came to be known as Albert the Great, Doctor Universalis.

[4] St. Thomas Aquinas, the author of a famous work on theology which is still an acknowledged authority on points of doctrine by the Roman Catholic church.

world down yonder longs to know about him.[5] Within that light is the exalted intellect of him who had such profound wisdom, that, if truth be truth, none other ever knew so much."

Then Boëthius, minister and philosopher at the court of Theodoric, and author of the beautiful book, "golden book" Gibbon calls it, *The Consolation of Philosophy,* is pointed out, or rather the light which contains his spirit, which St. Thomas tells Dante:

"came from martyrdom and from exile to this place."

When the enumeration of lights is complete, and each has been named, Dante brings the canto to a close with:

I beheld that wheel of glorious lights, moving, and within it, voice answering unto voice, in such unison, and with such sweetness, as can not be known save there where joy is everlasting.

CANTO XI

In this canto, the Dominican, Thomas Aquinas, praises a Franciscan, St. Francis of Assisi; in the next, a Franciscan, Bonaventura, returns the

[5] Solomon, whose place among the damned or blessed was a matter of dispute. "None like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any rise like unto thee." 1 Kings iii:12.

compliment by lauding St. Dominic. The two orders, Franciscan and Dominican, stand, one for gentle means of conversion, love; the other, for intellectual argument, dialectic, even force, as means of conversion. Both, great men, because influencers of many men, in their own time, and since; one, verily on fire with charity, founded a religious order, a vast society whose likeness to the Salvation Army is in many respects striking; the other, on fire with logic, founded a religious society of men, many of them powerful thinkers and highly cultivated, who sought to rid the world of heresy by arguments, theological and philosophical, and, when these failed, by sword, to sweep the Earth clean of heretics. These cantos contain what is the essence of true biography, a picture of the spiritual part of a man drawn in such words as all men, in every time, understand and respect. And, of all forms of writing, as none is nobler, so none is rarer.

The canto opens with twelve remarkable lines in which Dante exclaims upon the pettiness of human pursuits, compared with the glories of Paradise, which those very pursuits so often keep mortals from tasting.

How senseless, O man, your choice of things on which to set heart! How weak the reasons which lead you to pursue low aims! One was following the law, and one medicine, and one the Church, and

one was seeking to rule by might or by sophism, and one to rob, and one to have a hand in public affairs; one was immersed in the pleasures of the flesh, and one was devoting himself to idleness, when I, quit of all these things, was being received so gloriously with Beatrice in Heaven.

The lights which have been circling about Beatrice and Dante now pause, and, from the heart of the flame which contains the spirit of St. Thomas, they hear that Providence ordained two princes as guides for the Church.

"One[1] was endowed with seraphic love, the other,[2] because of his learning, was on Earth a cherubim for wisdom. I will speak of the former, since in praising one, both are praised, because every deed of theirs looked to the same end. He was still very young when he began to comfort the Earth with his great goodness; for, while yet a youth, he brought down his father's anger on him for falling in love with a lady[3] whom, like death, no man woos voluntarily. In the spiritual court,[4] and in his father's presence, he vowed himself to Poverty, and, from that instant, day by day, his love for her grew

[1] St. Francis.
[2] St. Dominic.
[3] Poverty.
[4] Before the Bishop of Assisi, i. e., in the spiritual court of his native town.

stronger. She, widowed of her first spouse[5] for more than eleven hundred years, despised and unknown, had gone uncourted till his coming.

"But in order not to speak in terms too obscure, from now on take Francis and Poverty to be these lovers.

"Their harmony and cheerfulness excited such affection, and admiration, and sympathy, in men, that the result was many conversions. The venerable Bernard was the first to go barefooted in pursuit of such profound peace, and, running, it seemed to him that he was slow. O undreamed of riches! O thrice prolific good! Egidius next bares his feet, and Sylvester his, following the bridegroom, so o'erwhelming is the loveliness of the bride. Thenceforth that father, and that master, pursued his own course, with his bride, and with the company of his followers who already had put on the humble cord;[6] nor did any misgivings of heart cause him to hang his head, because he was the son of Pietro Bernardone;[7] or because he had become an object of intense scorn. With dignity befitting a king, he explained to Innocent[8] his stern vow to be poor, and from him received the first official recognition for his Order. When the devotees of poverty had

[5] Christ, who lived a life of poverty.
[6] The Franciscans wore a cord instead of a girdle.
[7] The rich father of Francis.
[8] Pope Innocent III, about 1210, approved the monastic rule of St. Francis.

greatly increased, following the example of him whose wonderful life would be more adequately rehearsed in the glory of high Heaven, this blessed shepherd of many folds was crowned a second time by the Eternal Spirit, speaking through Honorius.[9] And, after this, thirsting for martyrdom, in the presence of the Sultan he preached Christ and the others who followed Him; and because he found the Saracens unripe for conversion, and in order not to remain where he could accomplish nothing, he returned to care for the harvest of the Italian faithful. On the rocky ridge between Tiber and Arno he received, direct from Christ, the last seal of approval,[10] which for two years his limbs bore. When it pleased Him who had chosen this one for such great good, to lift him up to the reward which his self-abasement merited, to his brethren, as to lawful heirs, he commended his most dear lady,[11] commanding them to love her faithfully; and, from her bosom, his il-

[9] Pope Honorius III confirmed the approval of the Order of St. Francis earlier given by Innocent. See 8, page 297.

[10] The Stigmata. The story is that St. Francis prayed to have the suffering of being crucified, in order that his outward life might be a complete copy of Christ's, and that Christ appeared to him, and that, from the moment of His appearance to the end, two years, St. Francis bore the nail marks, and lance scar, and suffered excruciatingly thereby, and always praised the Lord therefor. The Stigmata was the final seal of Heaven's approbation (the two earlier having come from Popes), the third seal, set on the Franciscan Order; the seal of a miracle.

[11] Poverty.

lustrious soul chose to depart, returning home, and for his dust he desired no other bier."[12]

CANTO XII

More spirits appear, each hidden in his own light, and form an outer, or second circle, about that inner circle of which St. Thomas, who has been speaking, is. In the outer circle St. Bonaventura, a Franciscan, begins to sing the praise of St. Dominic.

"The Love which makes me beautiful prompts me to discourse of that other leader[1] whose follower has spoken so highly of mine.[2] It is but right that when one is mentioned the other should be introduced, so that as, united, they carried on the struggle, so together may their glory shine. The army of Christ, which costs so much to re-equip, was following its standard[3] slowly, full of doubt and weak in numbers, when that Emperor who reigns forever[4] because of His Grace, and not on account of their desert, made provision for His soldiers that were in peril; and, as has been told, sent two champions to succor His Bride.[5] It was the words and deeds of

[12] Than the bosom of Poverty, the bare earth on which he chose to die.
[1] St. Dominic.
[2] St. Francis.
[3] The Cross.
[4] God.
[5] The Church.

these which reclaimed the people who had gone astray.

"In happy Callaroga[6] was born the passionate lover of the Christian faith, the holy champion, gentle to his own, and without mercy to his enemies. As soon as his soul had been created it was so replete with energy that, within his mother's womb, it made her a prophetess.[7] When the pledges for his baptism had been given at the sacred font, and he and Faith[8] had become one, dowering each other with salvation, the lady[9] who had given assent for him, beheld in her sleep the wonderful fruit which would one day come of him, and of his heirs.[10] He was named Dominic.[11] I speak of him as the husbandman whom Christ chose to assist Him with His garden. Of a truth did he seem Christ's messenger and friend, for the very first inclination which he manifested, was to follow the first precept which Christ gave.[12] Not for the world, love of which at present makes men toil, but for love of the true manna,[13] did he, in short while, become a mighty teacher, such that he set about pruning the vineyard of the

[6] The present-day Calahorra in Old Castile. St. Dominic was born in 1170.
[7] She had prophetic dreams about her son's future before he was born.
[8] Faith was St. Dominic's bride, as Poverty was the bride of St. Francis.
[9] His godmother, who had answered for him at baptism.
[10] The Dominicans.
[11] Named after the Lord, Dominus.
[12] "Sell that thou hast and give to the poor."
[13] Theology.

church which soon runs wild if the vinedresser be negligent. From the papal chair which, in former days, was more generous to the righteous poor, not because it has grown degenerate in itself, but because of the degeneracy of him who sits upon it, Dominic begged not[14] to be allowed to dispense to the poor only two or three where six was due, nor sought the first vacant benefice, the tithes of which belong to God's poor. He begged rather for leave to fight against the erring world in behalf of the seed of true faith, four and twenty plants of which encircle you.[15] Then, armed with doctrine and firm determination, together with the sanction of the Papacy, he issued forth like a torrent from on high, and on heretics his onslaught smote with greatest force where was most resistance. Afterward, from him there burst forth various streams by which the Catholic garden is watered so that the plants in it are becoming vigorous."

CANTO XIII

In this canto St. Thomas Aquinas again speaks, explaining the relation of Solomon's wisdom to that of Adam and Christ. The latter part of the canto is given over to warning mankind against

[14] He did not beg to be let off from giving the poor their dues.

[15] The twenty-four spirits in the double circle of lights where Dante now is, the sphere of the Sun.

coming to hasty conclusions on matters of theology and philosophy. The canto is omitted entirely, not because it lacks either interest or beauty, but simply because it does not contain matter of such striking interest, or passages of such unusual beauty as to make it essential, in any of its parts, to the idea of the present book, which is a volume of extracts only, though extracts which contain the thread of Dante's narrative, and not a little of his philosophy and reasoning about matters physical and matters spiritual; in a word, an introduction.

CANTO XIV

Solomon tells Dante about the bodies of the blest when they shall be given their flesh at the Last Judgment. Then comes the ascent to the Sphere of Mars, and sight of the Soldiers of Christ in what might be called a review, gigantic in scale, and complex in its movements, beyond power to conceive, save on the part of an extraordinary imagination, such as Dante had.

When, as Dante says, "the glorious *life* of Thomas became silent" (St. Thomas has been discoursing upon the vanity of human judgment), Beatrice begins:

"This man,[1] though he expresses it neither in his words nor in his thoughts, wishes to know

[1] Dante.

concerning yet another truth. Tell him if the light which now rays forth about your spirit will remain with you to all eternity, as it now is; and if it *is* to remain so, explain how, when you are again made visible in your flesh,[2] it can be possible for your eyes to endure such brightness."

As when, in a circle, dancers, urged on by increase of joy, all at once begin to sing, adding gaiety to motion, so upon the eager and devout request of Beatrice, the heavenly circles expressed their increase of joy by dancing and uttering wondrous melody. Whoever laments the exchange which implies death on Earth and life in Heaven, has never had the least conception of the happiness which Divine Love there dispenses.

That One and Two and Three, which lives forever, and forever reigns in Three, and Two and One, itself uncircumscribed, yet all things circumscribing, was three times praised in hymn so glorious that to hear it would be reward enough for every virtue. And in the divinest light of the smaller circle[3] I heard a low voice, such perhaps as that with which the angel spoke to Mary; it said:[4]

"As long as the joy of Paradise lasts, so long

[2] After the Resurrection.

[3] Dante and Beatrice, be it remembered, are still at the center of the two concentric circles of lights and spirits.

[4] After the saints have sung praises to the Trinity, Solomon, already described as "the light which is most beautiful among us," begins to answer the question which Beatrice has just asked.

shall our love clothe us in vesture of light. The brightness of it will be proportioned to the ardor of our love, the ardor of our love to the degree in which our vision of God is undimmed, and that is in accord as it receives grace beyond its own merit. When we shall again be clothed on with flesh, glorified and made holy, we shall become more acceptable to God because complete. Wherefore whatever light the Supreme God freely vouchsafes to us will be increased,—light which enables us to see Him. Hence will our power of vision increase, and therewith the ardor which such vision kindles, and also the brightness which comes from such ardor. But even as a flaming coal may itself be brighter than the flame, and within the flame remain visible, so, in like manner, will the radiance which now enfolds us be outshone by the flesh which, all this while has lain in the Earth. Nor will so intense a light be able to fatigue us, because the organs of the body will be endowed with strength for everything that can bring us pleasure."

So prompt and so eager to say "Amen," did both circles of saints appear, that it was evident indeed how much they longed for their dead bodies; not, it may have been, for their own sakes only, but for their mothers', and their fathers', and for the others whom they had loved, while yet they dwelt among the living.

And suddenly, on every side, and of the same

brightness, a glow burst forth like that which rises from the horizon at approach of day. And as with the approach of evening new objects begin to show themselves in the sky, so that our vision seems both true and false, in like manner I there began to see new spirits, and a circle forming outside the other two. O very radiance of the Holy Spirit! how instantaneous and incandescent it burst upon my eyes which, o'erwhelmed, endured it not! Beatrice showed herself to me so lovely, and so smiling, that I must leave undescribed her appearance as being among those sights which memory can not retain.

But from the sight of her my eyes got back the power to look up again, and I discovered that I was alone with my lady, and taken up into a loftier sphere of bliss.[5] That I had risen higher was evident by the fiery light of that star which was redder than it ordinarily looks.[6] With my whole heart, and with that speech which is one in all men,[7] I offered thanks to God, as was befitting this new grace. And the ardor of my offering had not died in my breast before I knew that my sacrifice had been received with favor, for such was the effulgence, and such the ruby splendor which, in the shape of a cross, appeared to me, that I cried out: "O God, who can bestow such beauty!"

[5] The Fifth Heaven, that of Mars.
[6] From the Earth.
[7] A grateful mind, i. e., thoughts of gratitude.

At this point memory outstrips my genius, for that Cross[8] was flashing forth Christ in a manner that makes every comparison futile. But he who takes up his own cross and follows Christ will hereafter excuse me for that which I leave undescribed, when in the radiance of that place he himself shall behold Christ, as shining as the lightning.

From arm to arm,[9] and between the head and the foot, lights moved, and sparkled brightly as they passed. Thus here on Earth, particles of every size are seen to move, level and sloping, swift and slow, always changing, within a sunbeam which now and then falls aslant through the darkness which men make by closing shutters. And as a viol or a harp produces harmony from many concordant strings, creating a sweet sound even when the tune can not be caught, so, by the lights which I there saw, a melody which ravished me was formed throughout the Cross, although I did not understand the hymn. But well did I know that it was of exalted praise, because I caught the words, "Arise and conquer," like one who, in spite of hearing, does not understand. So enthralled was I by it that until then nothing had bound me with such delightful fetters.

[8] The Cross of lights, or constellation of the spirits in Mars.
[9] The Cross. See Note 8.

CANTO XV

This canto is a monument among the works of men, for the substance, and the manner, of the picture which it draws of the possibilities of respect and affection between men of the same blood, though different generations, and of the possibilities for dignity and beauty in simple living. The latter, dealt with in a passage describing the simple life in the old days of Florence—those in which Dante's ancestor lived, is given on page eight.

One of the lights which has its place in the Cross of Mars now moves along the arm of the Cross toward Dante. It is his great-great-grandfather, Cacciaguida.

With equal tenderness the shade of Anchises opened his arms, if the word of our greatest Muse is to be believed, when, in the Elysian Fields, he descried his son.[1]

"O my own blood, O superabundant grace of God! To whom, as to you, was ever the gate of Heaven twice opened?"[2]

Thus said the light, and to its words I gave heed. Then I turned to look again upon my lady. I was awestruck by what I saw on either side, for deep in her eyes shone such a smile that, with mine, I

[1] Anchises when he saw Æneas, "stretched forth both hands eagerly." *Æneid,* vi. 685.

[2] Before death, and again, after.

thought to reach the depth of my allotted grace and of my bliss in Heaven.

When Dante has gained permission from Beatrice, he addresses the light.

"Earnestly do I beseech you, Living Topaz, gem of this precious Cross, that you tell me your name."

"O branch of my tree,[3] in whom, even while I waited I took pleasure, I was your ancestral root."

So saying he began his reply, then continued:

"He from whom your family gets its name, and who, for a hundred years and more, has been circling the lowest ledge of Purgatory, was my son and your great-grandfather; truly fitting would it be for you, by prayers, to shorten his long and wearisome stay down there."

CANTO XVI

This canto opens with an exclamation, nine lines long, charged with quaint figurativeness, and surcharged with sound understanding, against the emptiness of family pride, unless the dignity and importance of the family is maintained by ability and nobility on the part of the descendants who bear the name.

[3] Family.

Ah me! how poor a nobility is that which man bases upon blood! If here on Earth, where the zeal for good is feeble, it causes humankind to boast, I shall never again be astonished at the fact; because there, where no zeal for anything evil can exist, I mean in Heaven, I was myself proud of my own blood. But verily, pride of descent is a mantle which soon grows short, so that if material be not added to it now and then, Time continually shortens it with his shears.[1]

"Tell me, beloved forefather, who were your ancestors, and what were the years of your boyhood. Tell me about the sheepfold of St. John, my Florence; how large was it at that time, and which families in it were most worthy to be honored."

As an ember is quickened into flame by a gust of wind, so I beheld that light[2] grow brighter yet in answer to my eager words. And as it grew fairer to look upon, so with voice more soft and gentle, but not in the language of the present time, it said to me:

"From the day on which the angel said 'Hail,' to that on which my mother, now a saint, was in childbirth lightened of me with whom she had been laden, this fiery Mars had returned to the sign of

[1] Dante could have argued with a truth, which succeeding generations have attested, that if his ancestor, Cacciaguida, had founded a line to be proud of, and himself bestowed much honor on its origins, he, Dante, had added more; in a word that much material, and good, had been added to their family mantle even to the third and fourth generation.

[2] Cacciaguida.

Leo[3] five hundred and eighty times.[4] My fathers and I were born near the boundary of the last ward reached by those who take part in the annual races on St. John's day.[5] Of my ancestors this is enough for you to know; as to who they were, and whence they came, it is more modest to keep silent than to speak.

"The total number of those able to bear arms, who then dwelt between Mars and the Baptist,[6] was equal to one-fifth of the present population. But the blood of the citizens, which now is mixed with Campi, Certaldo, and Fighine,[7] at that time ran pure in the humblest artisan."

Cacciaguida then gives a long list of the famous families and great deeds of old, and closes the canto as follows:

"With these families, and others, I saw Florence in such tranquillity that she was utterly without oc-

[3] Its place in the zodiac.

[4] About one thousand and ninety years. In other words Cacciaguida was born about 1090 A. D.

[5] This race was run from west to east through the city of Florence. Cacciaguida means to say that their family was born on the east side, near the boundary of the last ward reached by the runners, i. e., the easternmost. This was the old quarter of the city. Having had their houses in it, proves how ancient a line the family came from.

[6] The church of St. John Baptist and the statue of Mars, which stood at the head of the old bridge across the Arno, were points in the circuit of the ancient walls of Florence, on the northern and southern sides.

[7] Small places in the neighborhood, from which country people moved into Florence.

casion for tears. With these families I saw her citizens so glorious, and so just, that the lily was never reversed upon the spear, nor made vermillion by party feuds."[8]

CANTO XVII

Dante asks his ancestor to tell him of his own future, and to make clear what the dark things vaguely foretold in Hell and Purgatory meant.

"O beloved source from which I sprang, exalted now so high that even, as human intellects see, a triangle can not contain two obtuse angles, so you, gazing upon God, to Whom all times are present, do see the possible events of life before they take place; while, with Virgil, I was climbing the mountain which purges souls of sin, and again, while I was descending through Hell, words of gloomy foreboding were said to me respecting my future, in spite of which I truly feel myself able to stand four-square against the strokes of fate. My longing to know would be soothed by hearing what fortune holds in store for me, because a dart foreseen does less hurt."

Not with ambiguous words, such as were used to fool the ancients,[1] before the Lamb of God, that

[8] He saw no victorious enemy drag the lily, emblem on the banner of Florence, in the dust, and he never saw it reddened by blood spilt as a result of political quarrels.

[1] The oracles of pagan times, such, for instance, as Delphi was in the habit of giving forth.

taketh away sins, had been slain; but with clear meaning and plain language did my dear forebear, swathed in, and made manifest by his own brightness, answer me.

"As Hippolatus was exiled from Athens because of his cruel and treacherous stepmother, so shall you be driven out of Florence. This is resolved upon, and will soon be accomplished, by him[2] who is giving his mind to it there where Christ is every day bought and sold. The blame, as usual, will be laid on the injured party, but vengeance shall bear witness to the God of truth Who repays. You will have to leave behind all that you hold most dear. This is the first grief of exile. You will have to learn how bitter is the bread of charity and how hard a thing it is to go up and down another's stairs.[3] But the most grievous burden laid upon you will be the evil and the foolish companions whom you will find in the valley of exile, every one of whom, ingrate, mad and malevolent, will turn against you. But soon, thereafter, they, not you, shall burn crimson with shame. Of their likeness to brutes their own conduct will give proof, so that it will be wise for you to have formed a party by yourself.[4]

"Your first refuge and abiding place will be the

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[2] Boniface VIII, who at this time was constantly trading in Church offices.

[3] To be obliged to eat other men's bread, and find shelter under other men's roofs.

[4] To have stood apart, and joined in none of their quarrels.

courtesy of the great Lombard, who will develop such deep affection for you that when, between you two, it comes to asking, and doing good, that will be first which between other men is last."[5]

CANTO XVIII

The opening scene of this canto is still in the sphere of Mars. In it some of the other lights of the Cross are made known to Dante; soldiers and defenders of the true faith. Later on, comes the ascent to Jupiter, where the souls of the just are made apparent by arranging themselves so as to shape out letters, and spell words. It is extraordinary that the complexity of the stage machinery and the elaborate stage "business" in nowise hinders the development, clear and convincing, of the loveliness and grandeur of the ideas of this canto in what might, with entire truth, be called their naked splendor. The whole canto, not more perhaps than many others, but as much surely, offers remarkable proof of Coleridge's declaration that, "the two sole component parts, even of genius, are

[5] This means that in his exile Dante's first host, Bartolommeo della Scala, lord of Verona, will love him so truly that he will grant favors to Dante before Dante can so much as ask for them, a reversal of the usual custom of life, which is first to ask favors and then, to have them granted, if granted at all. The gall of exile without cause, and the sweetness of much-needed but gratuitous hospitality in an alien land, have never been more beautifully recorded.

good sense and method." If genius requires more than these, Dante had that more, whatever it is; if not, his method, meaning technique, and his good sense, were enough, and must, as they exhibit themselves in this canto alone, establish the validity of Coleridge's view. The passage dealing with the nature of imagination and its place in art, which occurs in this canto, has been equaled but few times in the whole range of letters—once unquestionably by Shakespeare in the lines beginning: "Imagination bodies forth the forms of things unseen." The closing apostrophe to papal avarice is one of the most touching, and at the same time scathing, rebukes in *The Comedy.*

Looking at Beatrice, in whose eyes Dante sees the light of divine Grace reflected, he forgets the forebodings of exile, and all else, and, as he says, is completely overcome by the radiance. Beatrice says:

"Turn and listen, for not only in my eyes is Paradise."

The light which swathes Cacciaguida once more begins to glow, and its spirit speaks:

"In this fifth grade of Heaven, which draws its life from God on high, and to which new souls are ever coming, and from which none depart, are

blessed spirits who, before they came to Heaven, had on Earth attained such great renown as would give the loftiest poets worthy theme. Therefore look with all your might upon the arms of the Cross; he whom I shall name will swiftly flash, as lightning among the clouds."

At the mention of Joshua, even during the act, I saw a light dart along the Cross. Word and flash were simultaneous. And at the name of the great Maccabeus, I saw another light flashing, and whirling as it flashed. Ecstasy of joy made it spin as the whip a top. Likewise, when Charlemagne and Roland were named, my sharp gaze followed two more lights. Then leaving me to take its position among other lights of the Cross, the spirit that had been speaking showed me how noble a place was his in the choir of Heaven.

I turned to my right hand and sought, by look or gesture, to learn from Beatrice what next to do, and I beheld her eyes so sparkling and so rapturous, that her beauty outdazzled its usual and its utmost brightness. As a man, whose joy increases in well-doing, knows that his virtue is advancing, so I, seeing the wondrous Beatrice grown more glorious, perceived that the circle of the sphere in which I moved had increased its arc.[1] And as, in brief

[1] The higher the sphere, the greater and the nearer to God, and therefore the more glorious in itself, and the more glorious in appearance must they, who are in it, be.

space of time, the blush on a lady's cheek leaves her and she regains her natural color, such was the change there, because of the whiteness of the temperate sixth sphere[2] of Jupiter, which had received me within itself.[3] There, within Jove's planet, I beheld its spirits sparkling with love and, before my very eyes, spelling words in light. And, as birds, risen from a river's bank, seeming to exalt over their pasturage, form a flock, now round, now of other shape, so, enveloped in their flames, these blessed creatures sang as they flew, and flying, made themselves now D, now I, now L.[4] At first, as they sang, they swayed to their own music, but when they had formed into one of these letters, they paused a while and kept silence.

O divine Pegasea, who makest the wits of men glorious, and renderest them long-lived, as they, through thee, the cities and the kingdoms, illumine me with thyself that I may set forth their shapes, as I have conceived them; let thy power appear in these brief verses![5]

The spirits of light now spell out the entire sentence, *"Diligite justitiam, qui judicatis terram,"*[4]

[2] Jupiter was called temperate because it was between the fiery Mars and the cold Saturn.

[3] They have passed up into the next sphere, that of Jupiter.

[4] The first letters of *Diligite,* "Love ye," from the Wisdom of Solomon i:1. "Love righteousness ye that be judges of the earth."

[5] This passage is given in the words of Professor Norton's translation, revised edition.

and then rise and disperse like sparks when a burning log is struck. Finally, each having taken its own place, and become quiet, Dante says:

I saw the head and neck of an Eagle[6] depicted by that patterned fire.

O soldiery of Heaven on whom I gaze, pray for those who down in the world have all gone astray, following an evil example![7] Formerly it was the custom to wage war with swords, but now it is waged by withholding, sometimes here, sometimes there, that bread[8] which the pitying Father denies to none.

But you, who write only to cancel,[9] should bear in mind that Peter and Paul, who died for the sake of the vineyard that you are laying waste, do still live. In truth, can you say: "So fixedly have I set my heart on him[10] who willed to live solitary, and who for a dance was dragged to martyrdom, that I know neither the Fisherman nor Paul."

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[6] The emblem of justice, the Eagle, was, of course, the symbol of the Empire. Dante makes this the excuse for inveighing against the corruptions of the Papacy which were at that time the main stumbling block in the way of justice.

[7] The example of a wicked Pope, Boniface VIII.

[8] The sacraments of the Church.

[9] The Pope who writes excommunications for the sake of being paid to erase, and so withdraw them.

[10] The image of St. John Baptist was on the golden florin, and it was florins, or money, on which the Pope set his heart.

CANTO XIX

In front of me, with wings outspread, loomed the Eagle's splendid image,[1] outlined in flaming souls joyful in their glad fruition. Each was like a little ruby struck by a ray of intense sunlight, the light reflected back to my eyes. And that which I must needs now relate, was never told by voice before, nor written, nor by imagination comprehended, for I saw, and likewise heard, the beak speak words, and utter both "I," and "My," when in reality it was "We," and "Our."[2]

And it began:

"Because of justice and goodness I am exalted to the glory of Paradise. On Earth I left a memory, such that even the evil-minded commend it, though they do not follow the example which its tradition inculcates."

Dante now inquires concerning the eternal justice of God, and how it can damn the virtuous heathen.

The Eagle answers:

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[1] The Eagle, symbol of Justice under the Empire.

[2] The Eagle speaks in the singular number, whereas the thoughts which he expresses are plural, coming from the minds of the many souls by which he is shaped. The whole symbolizes the harmonious will of the Just, and the unity of Justice under the Empire. The whole theory of this canto is contained in Shirley's lines:

> "Only the actions of the just
> Smell sweet and blossom in the dust."

"He whose compasses fixed the circumference of the world, and who set within it so much that is hidden and so much that is manifest, could not stamp His personality on the whole Universe in such a way that his Word[3] should not immeasurably exceed all human powers of understanding. Therefore the vision which the world down yonder receives of Eternal Justice, penetrates it, much as your eye does the ocean. Though near the shore you look to the bottom, on the open sea you do not, yet none the less is the bottom there, though the depth con-

[3] Wisdom.

> "He took the golden compasses, prepared
> In God's eternal store, to circumscribe
> This universe . . .
> And said, . . .
> This be thy just circumference, O world!"
> *Paradise Lost,* VII. 225.

Along with Dante's and Milton's treatment of this subject (it may be called the definite aspect of creation), a superb illustration, of that sort of art wherein reasoned imagination far outdistances knowledge, another and equally remarkable treatment of the same subject should be remembered, the drawing of God setting compasses to the world, by William Blake. Like the Italian and the English verses under consideration, this drawing also has that epic grandeur which is never attained by art save as the artist ruthlessly turns his back on every adventitious detail, and sets his heart on the essential part of his subject, and his subject is sublime. In the poets' and the painters' accounts of the "laying off" of this world's measurements we have perfect illustration of how art attains to majesty; to sublimity. All such things give increase of meaning to Swedenborg's "There is nothing existing in human thought, even though relating to the most mysterious tenet of faith, but has combined with it a natural and sensuous image." This same sentence helps to clear our understanding and appreciation of Blake's drawing, and the lines of Dante and Milton, all three being essentially one and the same.

ceals it. There is no light save that which comes from God's Serene Heaven, which light is never darkened. All other light is darkness, either shadow of flesh, or its poison, sin.

"You say: 'Suppose a man is born on the banks of the Indus,[4] where there is none to tell him of Christ, and nought that he may read of Him, and none to write; yet every act of this man, and all of his desires are righteous, and, so far as human reason can see, his life is sinless in deed and word. He dies unbaptized, and without faith; what sort of Justice is that which sends him down to Hell? Wherein is he at fault for not believing?'

"Now who are you that, having extremely short sight, would sit in judgment on that which is a thousand miles away? Verily, for him who would ask subtle questions of me, were not the matter settled by authority of Scripture, there would be ample reason for doubting."[5]

Later on in the canto comes a wonderful passage in which Eagle declares that:

"To this Kingdom no one ever ascended who had not believed in Christ either before or after He was

[4] A heathen.

[5] The Eagle, in effect, says that divine Justice is utterly beyond the furthest reach of human understanding, but declares, with Scripture, that works without faith are not enough for salvation.

crucified. But behold how many now cry, 'Christ, Christ,' who at the Last Judgment shall be far less near to Him than some who knew Him not, and the Ethiop[6] shall make such Christians appear worthless indeed when the saved and the damned shall be separated, the one to all eternity rich, the other poor."

CANTO XX

The scene of this canto continues in the sphere of Jupiter, and the starry Eagle continues to speak.

As sound takes the form of music at the neck of a guitar, and as at the mouth-hole of a bagpipe the blowing makes notes, so, without more delay, a murmur rose through the Eagle's throat to its beak, as if it were hollow. And there it became a voice, and thence it burst forth in the shape of words, such as my heart,[1] whereon I wrote them, was awaiting.

"That organ in me which in earthly eagles has strength enough to look at the sun," began the heavenly Eagle, "you must now watch with care, because of all the starry lights that are united to delineate my shape, those that sparkle about my eye are chief. He who shines in the center, as pupil of my eye, was the singer of the Holy Spirit who bore the Ark

[6] Heathen.
[1] Memory.

from city to city. Now he knows the merit of his song because his reward is proportioned to it. Of the five who form the curve of my eyebrow, the one nearest my beak was he who consoled the poor widow for her son;[2] now he knows, through experience of this blessed state, and of its opposite, how dear a price is paid for not following Christ. And he who comes next upon the rise of the curve, of which I am speaking, through sincere repentance put off death;[3] now he understands that the eternal judgment is not altered when a worthy prayer causes what was ordained for to-day to be put off until to-morrow. The next, with good intention that bore evil fruit, in order to make place for the Pope, made the laws, and me, as well as himself, Greek;[4] now he knows how the evil which has resulted from his good deed has not diminished his own glory, although that deed should destroy the world. And he on the sinking curve was William, whom that realm mourns which now suffers because Charles and Frederick are alive;[5] now he knows how Heaven loves a just king, and in the brightness

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[2] Trajan, who from Hell was taken to Paradise.

[3] Hezekiah by repentance was given fifteen years of additional life.

[4] Constantine by leaving Rome to the Papacy helped to found its temporal power, which later made trouble. By taking the government and the Eagle, i. e., the Empire, to Byzantium, afterward Constantinople, they and the laws became Greek, Byzantium being a Greek city.

[5] William II, called the Good, king of Sicily, who was succeeded by Charles and Frederick, evil rulers.

of his light he declares it. Who, down in the wicked world, would believe that Rhipeus,[6] the Trojan, was fifth among the saintly fires in the curve of my eyebrow? He now knows much about divine grace that the world can not know, although even his vision pierces not to the utmost depths."

The Eagle goes on to explain how it is that Trajan and Rhipeus, both pagans, have been received into Heaven. Trajan, because of the prayers of St. Gregory the Great, was brought back from Hell after four hundred years, refleshed and given time to repent, which he did and so secured salvation. Because of his justice he was given such high station in the sphere of the just, and sits among the lights in the brow of the Eagle; Rhipeus, because he set his heart on virtue and goodness, was, by God's grace, saved. The Eagle explains that a thousand years before baptism was heard of, the faith, hope and charity which were his, served for his baptism. Then:

"O predestination, how hidden are thy workings from the understanding of those who are not able to fathom the mind of God. And you, mortals, be you careful in judging, for even we, who here see God, know not all the elect. But to us this lack of

[6] Rhipeus is mentioned by Virgil as the most just man of all the Trojans.

perfect knowledge is sweet, for our happiness is consummated in this, that what God wills we also will."

The story about Rhipeus is of Dante's own creating; that about Trajan, an ancient tradition. As the entire canto is a most noble hymn in praise of justice, these two stories bespeak a marvelous strength of inherent justice in Dante, the individual, and a not less wonderful faith in the doctrine that, "with God, all things are possible." It is just this that Ruskin means, where in *The Bible of Amiens* he says: "Quite the most beautiful sign of the power of true Christian-Catholic faith is this continual acknowledgment by it of the brotherhood—nay, more, the fatherhood, of the elder nations who had not seen Christ; but had been filled with the Spirit of God; and obeyed, according to their knowledge, His unwritten law. The pure charity and humility of this temper are seen in all Christian art, according to its strength and purity of race; but best, to the full, seen and interpreted by the three great Christian-Heathen poets, Dante, Douglas of Dunkeld, and George Chapman."

CANTO XXI

The ascent to the seventh sphere, that of Saturn, is made at the opening of this canto.

Within the crystal sphere which, revolving round the world, is named after its illustrious ruler,

Saturn, whose reign was the world's golden age of sinlessness, I beheld a glittering ladder that rose beyond my sight. And I saw coming down it such a vast number of resplendent creatures that I thought all the stars in Heaven had been shed upon it.[1]

St. Peter Damian, a famous doctor of the Church in the eleventh century speaks with Dante, first, telling how he came to such an exalted place, and later, hurling bitter invective against the present luxury of the priesthood. Of what is happening at the monastery of Fonte Avellana,[2] he says:

"I became so devoted to the service of God that, with no other food than olive juice, satisfied with the contemplative life alone, I easily endured both summer's heat, and winter's cold. In former days, that cloister yielded an abundant harvest to these Heavens, but now it has become barren as must, of necessity, soon appear. In that place I was Peter Damian, and Peter the sinner I had been. Few were the years left to me when I was sought out and dragged to that hat[3] which is now regularly

[1] This is Jacob's Ladder, Gen. xxviii, 12, "upon which," says St. Bernard, "is whosoever aspires to Heaven. It is the Church Universal."

It signifies the contemplative life, because of which the soul, meditating upon God, ascends to Him.

[2] Not far from Urbino.

[3] St. Peter Damian, against his will, was made Cardinal Bishop of Ostia. The increasing corruption of the College of Cardinals is referred to by the "bad to worse."

passed down from bad to worse. Cephas[4] came, and the great vessel of the Holy Spirit[5] came, lean and barefoot, and got their food at any house that chanced. But nowadays the modern prelates require attendants for support upon either hand, and another to go before, so fat are they grown, and yet others behind, to carry their trains. Their mantles cover their palfreys, so that two beasts go under one hide. O Patience of God that can endure so much!"

CANTO XXII

St. Benedict appears and tells of the founding and decline of the Benedictine Order.

"The top of that mountain on the side of which Cassino[1] lies, was of old inhabited by a pagan race. I am he who first carried to its summit, the name of Him who brought to Earth the truth, because of which we here are so high exalted. Such grace was showered on me that I induced the surrounding villages to give up the impious worship which was misleading the world. With me here, are my brothers; they who fixed their feet within the cloisters, and kept steadfast hearts."

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[4] St. Peter, the rock on which the Church was founded. John i:42.

[5] St. Paul. Acts ix:15.

[1] Monte Cassino, in the Kingdom of Naples, crowned with a temple to Apollo, was chosen by St. Benedict as the spot on which to found, in 529, the first monastery of his Order.

I answered:

"The affection that you show in speaking with me, and the propitious aspect which I see and mark throughout the surrounding company of lights, have expanded my trust, as the sun a rose. Therefore, I pray you, Father, tell me whether I am fit to receive such great grace as that of seeing your countenance, without the veil of its concealing light."

ST. BENEDICT

"Brother, your noble wish shall be granted up in the last sphere, there where all others are to be granted, and mine, too. There, every desire becomes righteous, perfect, complete. There are neither space nor poles,[2] and thereto our ladder reaches up, and hence the top of it is beyond your sight. Up to that point the patriarch Jacob saw it stretch, when it was revealed to him, laden with so many angels. But nowadays no human being attempts to climb it, and my Rule[3] counts for no more than waste paper. Those walls that once were the house of prayer, have become dens, and the cowls are sacks full of bad meal. But heavy usury is not exacted so absolutely contrary to God's pleasure, as that fruit which makes the heart of the monks so mad; for everything which the Church holds in keeping,

[2] The Empyrean, immovable, without axis or poles.
[3] The law of the Benedictine Order.

is all for them who ask it in the name of God, and not for kindred, or others more vile. Mortal flesh is so weak that a good earthly beginning does not give assurance from the springing of the oak to the ripening of the acorn. Peter began without gold or silver, and I with prayer and fasting, and Francis founded his convent on humility. And if you regard the beginning of each, and then realize how far it has gone astray, you will see that what was white is now soiled. Truly it would be more marvelous to witness succor in this case, than it was to see Jordan rolled back, and the sea fleeing when God willed it."

Dante now prays for greater light, and power of heavenly knowledge, to complete his work, and Beatrice says:

"So close on ultimate salvation are you now that, in truth, your eyes need be clear and keen. Therefore, before you go deeper into it, again look down and see how vast a universe I have already set beneath your feet, in order that your heart, rejoicing to its utmost, may be presented joyous unto the triumphant throng which, all gladness, moves through the spheral ether."

My gaze traveled back across all the seven spheres, and lighted on this globe of ours, so small that I smiled at its paltry aspect; and that counsel I

approve as best, which holds it to be of the least account. Truly he may be numbered among the righteous who sets his thoughts elsewhere. I saw the daughter of Latona[4] shining without her spots. The dazzling brightness of the sun I could there endure, and I marked how, round about it, and near to it, moved Mercury and Venus. Then to my sight appeared the temperate Jove, between his father, Saturn, and Mars, his son; and then I understood the reason for the variation in their movements. There I saw all seven of them,[5] how vast they are, and how swift moving they are, and how far from one another they are placed. The little threshing-floor of Earth, about which we are so arrogant, lay spread out beneath my eyes, from hill-top to river mouth, as I revolved with the eternal Twins.[6]

Then I turned my eyes back to the beautiful eyes of Beatrice.

CANTO XXIII

The spirits that have part in the triumph of Christ appear, and then a vision of Christ Himself is granted. Overcome by the surpassing brightness, the Vision withdraws on high, and the light pours down over the garden of Christ, wherein

[4] The Moon.
[5] The planets.
[6] Dante is standing in the sign of Gemini, when he takes this general view of the universe, and more particular look at the world.

Dante sees the Virgin rose, and the Apostolic lilies. At last, the Angel Gabriel descends, and crowns the Virgin, upon which she rises into the Empyrean, and all the saints flame upward as if to follow her. Full of mysticism and beauty, a thing to be understood as far as possible, and, beyond that, felt,—this canto is of amazing loveliness. It is easy to realize why it has often been maintained to be the most exalted poetry in *The Comedy*.

Beatrice, rapt in expectation, is gazing fixedly on high when, suddenly, her countenance becomes far more resplendent than Dante has yet seen it, and she exclaims:

"Behold the hosts of the Triumph of Christ, and all the fruits harvested by the influence of Heaven."

Her face fairly blazed it seemed to me, and her eyes were so full of joy that, without even attempting a description, I am obliged to pass on.

As in the clear Heavens, at her full, the moon smiles among the eternal stars which enrich the firmament, throughout its immeasurable depths, so I saw, brighter than numberless lamps, a Sun from which they all received their light, as the stars, theirs, from our sun.[1] And, through that living fire, the glory of Christ smote so bright upon my face, that I could not endure it.

O Beatrice, my guide, gentle and adored!

[1] The stars were supposed to get their light from the sun.

She replied:

"That which overwhelms you is a power from which nothing can shield itself. Here are the Wisdom and the Virtue that opened the way between Heaven and Earth, for which there had been so long a period of yearning."

Dante, utterly overcome, is brought back to himself by Beatrice, who says:

"Open your eyes, and behold me, as I am, for you have seen such things that, from now on, you will be able to sustain my smile."

I was like one who is still subject to the effect of a forgotten vision, as he strives vainly to recall it to his thought, when I heard this invitation, which begot such gratitude that it can never be erased from those leaves of my memory, whereon are written the records of the past. If all the tongues were now to sound for my assistance which Polyhymnia and her sisters have endowed with their sweetest gifts, the thousandth part of the truth could not be compassed in singing of her blessed smile, and how it sanctified her holy countenance. And so, in picturing Paradise, the consecrated poem must needs make a leap, like a man who finds his way cut off. But whoever considers the weighty theme, and the mortal shoulder that must carry it, will not blame me if I stagger. It is no voyage for a little bark, this which my dar-

ing prow goes cleaving, nor for a pilot who would spare himself.

BEATRICE

"Why does my face so absorb your love that you heed not the fair garden[2] which blooms beneath Christ's radiant light? Here is the Rose[3] in which the Divine Word was made flesh; here are the lilies[4] whose fragrance made it possible to follow the true way."

The name of that beautiful flower, on which I call both morning and night, chained all my thoughts to itself, as the brightest of all the lights. And when my vision had been stamped with the brilliance and vastness of that living star, which excels on high, as she excelled down here, there descended, from out the heart of Heaven, a ring of fire, shaped like a crown, which circled her,[5] and wheeled around her. Whatever melody sounds sweetest upon Earth, and most enthralls our souls, would resemble a thunderclap, compared with the tones of that lyre,[6] which crowned the heavenly Sapphire whose azure gives the color to the Empyrean sky.

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[2] The saints.
[3] The Virgin.
[4] Apostles and Saints. The image is taken from St. Paul, 2 Corinthians ii:14.
[5] The Virgin, or the star that was the Virgin, chief glory of the garden of the Blest.
[6] Gabriel.

This music-scattering lyre, circle of sweet-sounding light, Angel of the Virgin's Coronation, now chants:

"I am Love Angelic, circling that Supreme joy which breathes from out the womb which was Christ's pre-natal dwelling; and I shall go on circling, Queen of Heaven, until, following your Son, you shall confer more divinity upon the Empyrean, by entering it."

Into such words did the circling melody shape itself, and the name of Mary, by all the other stars, was sung.

This chant of Gabriel's ended, the Virgin rises to Christ in the Empyrean, and is lost to sight. The saints remain below with Dante.

He next describes the Primum Mobile calling it a

royal mantle for all the revolving spheres of the universe,

and tells us that its inner side was so far distant that his eyes could not follow

the crowned flame[7] when she mounted thither to her offspring.[8]

[7] The Virgin.
[8] Christ.

Before my eyes the saints began to sing *"Regina coeli"*[9] so sweetly, that the pleasure given, never leaves me. Oh, how great is the abundance stored up in those thrice blessed souls who on Earth were such good ground for the seed of righteousness. Here they dwell, and here enjoy the treasure laid up while they wept in that exile of Babylon, where they paid no heed to gold. Here beneath the exalted Son of God and Mary, together with saints, both of the Old and the New Testament, triumphing in his victory is he[10] throned who holds the keys to all this glory.

It is such "unfathomable song" as this canto that can alone make one realize what Shelley means when he says: "Poetry exalts the beauty of that which is most beautiful; it marries exaltation and horror, grief and pleasure, eternity and change;—every form moving within the radiance of its presence is changed by wondrous sympathy to an incarnation of the spirit which it breathes."

CANTOS XXIV, XXV, XXVI

These three cantos form a group apart, but, taken together, they are an important link in the

[9] A hymn appointed by the Church to be sung on certain days following Easter. It is one of the noblest of all hymns. "Rejoice, O Queen of Heaven, for He whom thou wert worthy to bear, has risen as He promised; to God, pray for us. Hallelujah."

[10] St. Peter.

chain of consequences which lead to the natural culmination of the Paradise. In them is given an account of the examination which Dante, like every human being, must pass upon the three subjects, Faith, Hope and Charity, before he is ready to partake of that glory to which we are told, at the close of Canto XXIV, St. Peter holds the keys. Beatrice presents Dante for his examination in each of the three subjects.

CANTO XXIV

It opens with a passage in which Beatrice appeals to the Apostles and the Saints to bestow some of their knowledge upon her companion and friend.

"O Fellowship elect to the great supper of the blessed Lamb, Who so feeds you that your desire is always satisfied, inasmuch as this man, by God's grace, is having some foretaste of that which drops from your table,[1] before death has fixed the number of his days, give heed to his intense longing, and somewhat refresh him, since you are always drinking at the fountain whence flows the knowledge for which he thirsts."

A light of greater brightness than the others comes forth from the throng of celestial fires. It is St. Peter. To him Beatrice says:

[1] Knowledge of divine things.

"O light, everlasting, of the great man with whom our Lord left the keys of this marvelous joy; the keys, he carried to the world; examine this man, as pleases you, on points easy and difficult, concerning the Faith by means of which you walked upon the sea."

ST. PETER

"Speak, good Christian, make yourself clear. What is Faith?"

DANTE

"May the grace which vouchsafes to me that I confess to the chief centurian, cause my ideas to be wisely worded!

"As the truthful pen, Father, of your beloved brother[2] (who, together with yourself, set Rome on the right road), wrote, Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen;[3] and this appears to me to be the essence of it."

ST. PETER

"You apprehend rightly, if you discern correctly why he ranked it first with the substances, and then with the evidences."

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[2] St. Paul.
[3] Hebrews xi:1.

DANTE

"The profound mysteries which are here understandable, on Earth are so hidden from human eyes that their very existence is a matter of Faith, upon which our high hopes are founded, and for this reason it is known as substance. From this faith we deduce our reasoning without more insight, and hence it comes to be designated as evidence."[4]

ST. PETER

"If all that in the world passes for doctrine, were understood after this manner, foolish argument would there be done away with. Very well have you explained the alloy and the weight of the coin;[5] but tell me, have you it in your own purse?"[6]

DANTE

"Yes, I have it so shining and so round that in its stamp there is nothing doubtful to me."

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[4] All our ideas concerning another world are matters of belief, the spiritual world having no visible or provable existence upon Earth. Hope of a future life, and another world, rests on belief which implies Faith. It is properly called substance, being the foundation on which hope rests. Again, since our belief, which is Faith, gives us our grounds for reasoning about the future, it is properly called evidence.

[5] Faith.

[6] Your heart.

ST. PETER

"This precious gem upon which every virtue rests, whence came it to you?"

DANTE

"The plenteous rain of the Holy Spirit, which is poured forth upon the Old and the New parchments, is an argument which proves it to me so conclusively, that, by comparison, all other demonstrations seem dull."[7]

ST. PETER

"The Old and the New which are so conclusive to you—why do you accept them as the word of God?"

DANTE

"The proofs which disclose their authenticity to me are the miracles that followed the Word, for which nature neither heated iron, nor struck anvil."

ST. PETER

"Speak, what assurance have you that these miracles really were performed? The very thing which

[7] The inspiration made manifest in the Old and New Testaments.

requires to be proved, and none other, testifies to you in its own behalf."

DANTE

"If the world were converted to Christianity without miracles, this is itself so great a miracle, that the others are not a hundredth part so strange; for, poor and hungry, you entered the field to sow the good plant which, once was a vine, and is now degenerated to a bramble."

This being ended, the high and holy court resounded through the spheres a "We Praise Thee, O God," in the melody such as is sung only up there.

CANTO XXV

These twelve opening "lines of infinite pathos and beauty," as W. W. Vernon describes them, are an utterance, almost a wail, on Dante's part, before his examination on Hope begins,—his own supreme hope and wish in this world having been recall from banishment, and the recognition of his poetic greatness by Florence. The translation is Longfellow's:

If e'er it happen that the Poem Sacred,
To which both heaven and earth have set their hand,
So that it many a year hath made me lean,
O'ercome the cruelty that bars me out
From the fair sheepfold, where a lamb I slumbered,
An enemy to the wolves that war upon it,

With other voice forthwith, with other fleece
Poet will I return, and at my font
Baptismal will I take the laurel crown;
Because into the Faith that maketh known
All souls to God there entered I, and then
Peter for her sake thus my brow encircled.

The light that is St. James, now disengages itself from the others, and comes forward, and speaks.

ST. JAMES

"Since our Sovereign Emperor wills, with infinite grace that, while yet in the flesh, you shall come face to face with His saints, in His most secret council-chamber, in order that, having once seen the truth of this court, you may thereby confirm in yourself and others that Hope which on Earth rightly makes men fall in love with it,—say, what it is, and why it abounds in your mind, and also tell me whence it came to you?"

Beatrice, fearful that the answer to the second question may embarrass Dante, replies to it herself, the answer involving self-praise.

BEATRICE

"The Church militant has no child more hopeful; therefore was it granted unto him to come up to Jerusalem out of Egypt,[1] and to see, before the days of his mortal strife are ended."

[1] From Earth to Heaven.

Beatrice now adds that Dante may answer the other question for himself.

DANTE

"Hope is the sure expectation of glory to come, the effect of divine grace, and preceding merit. This light comes to me from many stars,[2] but he first instilled it into me who was the supreme singer of the Supreme Leader.[3] 'Let them hope in Thee who know Thy name,' he sings in his noble Psalms; and who does not know it, if he has my faith? And later, you, in your Epistle did imbue me with that which he had instilled, so that I am running over with it, and, upon others in turn I shower your rain."[4]

ST. JAMES

"That love, with which I still yearn for the virtue[5] which followed me even to martyrdom, and to my issuance from mortal strife,[6] wills that I speak again to you, who take such delight in it. I would have you tell me what it is that Hope promises you?"

[2] "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever." Dan. xii:3.
[3] David.
[4] Hope.
[5] Hope.
[6] Death freed him from the battle of life.

DANTE

"The New and the Old Scriptures establish the goal,[7] and that means Hope. Of the souls whom God has made His friends, Isaiah says, that in his true home[8] every one shall be robed in a double vesture, and his true home is this blessed place. And more explicitly yet, does your brother make manifest to us this same revelation, in that passage where he treats of the white robes."[9]

Immediately, these words had been spoken, *"Sperent in te,"*[10] resounded overhead, to which all the choirs made answer.

CANTO XXVI

St. John, whose radiance has dazzled Dante to the point of blindness, now proceeds with his examination. He first asks Dante what led him to desire Divine Love. Dante replies that God is the beginning and end of all love, and that he knows this by the aid of philosophy and divinely revealed authority. Dante says:

"The voice of God makes it plain, Who, speaking of Himself, said to Moses: 'I will make thee see all

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[7] Paradise, and the bliss thereof.
[8] Paradise. Isaiah lxi:7.
[9] St. John in the Apocalypse, Revelation vii:9-17.
[10] *"Et sperent in te, qui noverunt nomen tuum,"*—"They that know thy name will put their trust in thee."

goodness."[1] You also make it plain, at the beginning of that sublime announcement[2] which, in the world, proclaims the mystery of Heaven louder and more clearly than all other proclamations."

And I heard:

"With the help of human intellect, and concordant authority of Scripture, your sovereign love is centered on God; but say further, do you feel other cords draw you to Him, so that you can tell by how many reasons this love holds you."

DANTE

"All those incentives, which can draw the heart to God, have had a part in my love; for the existence of the world, and my own being, the death which He suffered that I may live, and that which all the faithful hope, as I do, together with the already-mentioned vital consciousness, (that God is the supreme good and hence the supreme object of love),—all these incentives have drawn me forth from the sea of perverted love, and set me on the shore of the true. The leaves, wherewith the entire garden[3] of the Eternal Gardener is made green, I

[1] Exodus xxxiii:19.

[2] It is not clear precisely what line of Revelation is here meant, but probably, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."

[3] The world.

love in proportion to the perfection He has bestowed on each."

As soon as I was silent a chant of indescribable sweetness reverberated through the Heavens, and my lady, with the others sang: "Holy, Holy, Holy."

Dante now asks Beatrice about a new light, and she answers:

"Within those beams the first soul[4] which God created is gazing with joy upon its Maker."

Dante, tremendously moved by the presence of Adam, begs him to speak, and Adam says:

"You wish to hear how long it is since God placed me in the lofty Eden garden, where this lady[5] prepared you for the tremendous ascent, and for how long a time I rejoiced in the garden, and the true cause of the great wrath, and what language I used and originated. My son, the tasting of the tree was not in itself the reason of so great a banishment, but only the disobedience. In that place,[6] which your lady besought Virgil to leave, I longed for the congregation of the Blest while the Sun completed four thousand three hundred and two revolutions;[7] and

[4] Adam.
[5] Beatrice.
[6] Limbo.
[7] Years measured by the sun's revolution.

while I dwelt upon the Earth I saw him[8] return to the lamps of his pathway,[9] nine hundred and thirty times. The language which I spoke was wholly extinct long before the race of Nimrod attempted the impossible task, for no product of human reason can last forever because human likings vary under the influence of the stars.[10] It is a natural thing for man to speak, but the manner of his speech nature leaves wholly to his own pleasure. Before I went down to the misery of Hell, the Supreme God, from whom issues the joyous light which clothes me, was on Earth called I; later He was called El; and this is natural, for the custom of mortals is like the leaf on a branch which goes away and another comes. On the mountain,[11] which rises highest from the waves, I lived my life of innocence and guilt, from the first hour to the sixth, when the sun changes quadrant."

CANTO XXVII

"To the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost," all Paradise began to chant so sweetly that

[8] The sun.

[9] The signs of the Zodiac.

[10] Human speech, the product of human reason, changes with the alteration of human inclinations, which inclinations were, according to thirteenth-century belief, influenced by the stars.

[11] Adam dwelt in the Earthly Paradise, i. e., on the summit of the mount of Purgatory, a little more than six hours. The sun changing quadrant means completing a quarter of his circle; a quarter of the day, which is six hours.

I became infatuated. That which my eyes saw, appeared to me to be a smile of the universe. My infatuation poured in upon me through both eyes and ears. O rapture! O unutterable bliss! O perfect life of love and peace! Riches secure, with nothing left to long for!

The four lights which are Peter, James, John and Adam, Dante sees blaze on, and one of them, Peter, increase his brightness and turn crimson.

When silence, by God's will, had fallen on the blessed choir, I heard:

"If I change color, marvel not; for while I speak[1] you shall see all these likewise change color. He who on Earth usurps my place, my place, my place, which, in the eyes of the Son of God, is vacant, has made my tomb a sewer of blood and filth, because of which, down there, the Evil One, who fell from here, is pleased."

Dante says that he then saw all Paradise grow fiery red, and Beatrice blush with indignation.

Just such a change, I deem, took place in Heaven when Almighty God was crucified.

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[1] St. Peter is speaking of the Papacy, and his own successors.

St. Peter continues, in a voice as much unlike his usual voice, as his countenance is changed from its wonted appearance:

"The Bride of Christ[2] was not nourished with my blood, and that of Linus, and of Cletus, to be used for the sake of gaining gold; but to make sure of this happy existence did Sixtus, and Pius, and Calixtus, and Urban, shed their blood after much weeping.[3] It was not our intention that a part of the people should sit at the right hand, and another part at the left, of our successors; nor that the keys, which were entrusted to me, should become the emblem on a banner carried in war against Christians;[4] nor that I myself should be made the figure on a seal to venal and false privileges, because of which I often turn scarlet and flash with anger. From here on high, ravenous wolves, clad as shepherds, are to be seen in every pasture. O defense of God, why do you still slumber! To drink our blood the Cahorsines and the Gascons[5] are making ready. O good beginning, to what a vile end must you go down! But I am sure that the high Providence which at Rome, with Scipio, defended the glory of

[2] The Church.
[3] All Bishops of Rome who suffered martyrdom.
[4] Boniface VIII, fighting the Calona family, is here referred to. See Inf. XXVII.
[5] St. Peter sees a native of Cahors (Pope John XXII) and one of Gascony (Pope Clement V) preparing to enrich themselves at the cost of the Church.

the world, will soon bring succor. And you, my son, who because of your mortality, will again return to Earth, speak out; hide nothing of that which I have declared."

CANTO XXVIII

In this canto Dante enters the Crystalline Heaven of the ninth sphere, and sees and learns about the heavenly hierarchies. As he listens to the discourse of Beatrice he suddenly becomes aware, gazing into her eyes, of the reflection of a thing which he had neither seen nor thought of before.

I saw a Point[1] whence radiated a light so incandescent that whatever eye it strikes upon must needs close instantly. Whatever star looks smallest from the Earth would, by comparison, seem a moon. At about the same distance as the circle appears which girdles the light from which it gets its color, when mist is densest, a flaming ring about this Point was whirling.

So rapid was its motion that it would have surpassed the sphere which moves most swiftly around the world;[2] and this was encircled by another, and that by a third, and the third by a fourth, the fourth by a fifth, and the fifth by a sixth. Then came the

[1] The Glory of God. Since a point is indivisible, this point of ineffable glory is an adequate symbol of the Unity of the Godhead.

[2] Primum Mobile.

seventh, and it was of such a vast span that, were the messenger of Juno[3] made entire, it would be too narrow to contain this seventh circle. In like fashion followed the eighth, and the ninth. Each revolved with slower motion according as it was more distant from the Point. The circle nearest to that Pure Spark had the clearest light; I believe, because it most partakes of Its truth.

My lady, who saw how greatly I was perplexed,[4] said:

"On that Point, the Heavens, and all nature, depend. Observe the circle which is nearest, and know that its motion is so swift because of the burning love which spurs it on."

Beatrice now discourses to Dante on how it comes about that this smallest, and swiftest, of the circles of the hierarchy, should govern the outermost and largest of the nine spheres which revolve about the Earth. The idea is, that God can be conceived of as the Point, and as such, lacking all spacial dimensions, at the center of the universe, and also as that which contains the entire universe. Hence the circle nearest Him is most like Him, and the sphere which is greatest, as containing all the others, is also most like Him. It follows then that the two most

[3] Iris, the rainbow, the arc of which, completed, would form a circle.

[4] How much he wanted to know more of that at which he was looking.

alike should be closest connected, as is the case, Beatrice tells Dante, between the smallest circle and the largest sphere.

And when she ceased speaking the circles threw out sparks as does molten iron. Every spark danced within the ring of its own fire, and the number of them was exceeding great. And I heard "Hosannah," echoing from choir to choir, in praise of that fixed Point which sustains them, and will eternally sustain them, in the appointed place where they have been forever.

CANTO XXIX

In the first part of this canto Beatrice speaks of the creation and nature of Angels. The passage is both difficult and beautiful. In the second, she reprimands the clergy, and says much about the preaching that is being spread far and wide.

BEATRICE

"On Earth men dream when not asleep, some believing, and others not believing, what they say to be the truth, but of the two these last are more to blame and shameful. You mortals cling to no single philosophy, so much do you love to make display of learning, and so carried away are you by the thought of it. But this reaps less indignation here

on high than the setting aside, or the perversion of the Holy Scriptures. Men forget how much blood it costs to spread knowledge of them in the world, or how greatly, he who conforms to them, pleases God. Every one strives to advertise himself, and creates fancies of his own. The preachers take these to preach on, and pass by the Gospel in silence. One says that the moon turned backward at the time of Christ's Passion, and interposed herself so that the sun's light was cut off from the Earth; others say that the light voluntarily ceased shining and so the eclipse covered the Spaniards and the Indians as well as the Jews.[1] Florence contains not so many Lapi and Bindi[2] as is the number of such fables shouted, year by year, from the pulpits on every side, so that the unhappy sheep return from their pasturage fed with wind; and not seeing the harm, is no excuse. Christ did not say to His first congregation;[3] 'Go forth, and preach idle tales to the world,' but He laid bare for them the foundation of truth. It was this alone that sounded from their mouths. The Gospel alone, was shield and lance for them in their struggle to kindle Faith. Now men go forth to preach, with jests and buffooneries,

[1] Reached from India to Spain; east to west over the whole Earth, is the meaning.

[2] Nicknames as common in Florence then as Dick and Jack are with us to-day.

[3] The apostles.

and if they can but get a laugh the cowl[4] grows proud, and nothing more is asked. But in the folds of that hood a bird of such ill-omen[5] has built its nest, that, should the multitude see it, they would understand the sort of pardon they were trusting to."

CANTO XXX

In this canto Dante actually ascends to the Empyrean and beholds the entire glory of Paradise. Turning his eyes to Beatrice, they are still in the ninth sphere, he bursts forth about her once more, declaring that:

If all that has, up to now, been said of her could be gathered into a single eulogy, it would fall short indeed for the present purpose. The beauty which I beheld so transcends all human beauty that I believe its Maker can alone enjoy it to the full.

From the day that I first saw her face on Earth, until this sight of her in Paradise, the power to follow, with descriptive words, has never failed me,

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[4] The wearer of a cowl, the preacher. In Cowper's *Task*, the poet, speaking on this same subject, says:

> "'Tis pitiful
> To court a grin, when you should woo a soul;
> To break a jest, when pity would inspire
> Pathetic exhortation; and t' address
> The skittish fancy with facetious tales,
> When sent with God's commission to the heart!"

[5] The devil, in monks' clothing, is what the passage refers to.

but from now on my power must relinquish all further attempt to set forth her loveliness in verse, for no artist can surpass his utmost.

Such, I leave her to a loftier heralding than that of my trumpet, which is bringing its great theme to a close. With the gesture, and the tone of one who is a leader, she said:

"We have come forth from the greatest of the spheres into that Heaven which is pure light; light intellectual o'erflowing with love; love of true good o'erflowing with joy; joy which exceeds all sweetness. Here you shall see both of the armies of Paradise.[1]

Indescribable light now blazes forth in all directions; Beatrice explains, saying:

"That Love which bestows tranquillity upon this Heaven, with such a salutation always gives welcome unto Itself."

No sooner had these few words come to me than I realized that I was rising above myself.[2] I saw a river of light, all shimmer and sparkle, flowing between banks that bloomed with marvelous spring. Forth from that river rose living sparks which found their resting place in the flowers that were

[1] The Angels, and the Saints; "the spirits of just men made perfect." The former made war against the rebel angels, and the latter against sin.

[2] Above his own faculties.

everywhere, even as rubies set in gold. Then, as if intoxicated by the perfumes, they plunged once more into that wondrous stream and as one went down another came up.

Beatrice, whom Dante at this point calls "Sun of my eyes," says:

"The river, and the topazes that enter and come out, and all the smiling flowers, are but foreshadowings of the truth, not that in themselves they are imperfect, but that your vision is not yet so high exalted."

And I saw both the Courts of Heaven.[3]

O splendor of God, through which I beheld the consummate triumph of the realm of truth, now grant me strength to tell how I saw it!

There is light on high which makes the Creator visible to that creature which finds its peace only in contemplating Him. The circumference of that light extends so far that its circle would be too great a girdle for the sun. As a hillside is reflected by water at its foot, as if to admire itself, when richly decked with leaves and flowers, so, above the light, circling and rising, on more than a thousand seats, I saw mirrored all those of us who have returned on high.[4]

[3] Angels and Saints.

[4] The number of mankind who, up to that time, had reached Heaven.

To the heart of the eternal and everlasting rose, which opens wide, and rises in tiers, and exhales the odor of praise, unto the Sun that there keeps undying spring, Beatrice, like one who is silent and yet would speak, led me, and said:

"Behold how vast is the congregation of the white robes![5] Look on our city, how broad its circuit! Behold our seats so well filled that small is the number of them for whom the empty benches wait!"

CANTO XXXI

Then was shown to me, in the form of a pure white rose, that blessed host which Christ, in His own blood, made bride. The other host[1] which, always on wing, beholds and sings the glory of Him who enamors it, and the goodness of Him who has made it so glorious, like bees, which now go down into blossoms, and again return to the hive, descended into that vast and many-petaled flower, and thence remounted up to where their love forever sits enthroned. The faces of all were living flame, and their wings were gold, and the rest was of such exceeding whiteness as never snow attained. When they went down into the flower, rank after rank, they bestowed on it some of the peace and

[5] 'He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment." Rev. iii:5.

[1] The Saints, forever quiet upon their thrones: the Angels, in everlasting flight.

ardor which they had acquired in their flying. Nor did this host, so numerous, winging its course between the flower and that which was on high,[2] obstruct the vision or the splendor, for the light of God penetrates the whole universe, according to its merit, so that nothing can impede it. This safe and happy kingdom, thronged with people of ancient and of modern time,[3] fixed its whole gaze, and all its love, upon one sole point.

O Threefold Light which in a single star, blazing on their sight, so satisfies them, deign to look down upon our tempest here below!

If the Barbarians, coming from the far north, were struck dumb with wonder at the sight of Rome and her mighty works—at the time when the Lateran towered above everything mortal[4]—with what astonishment must I have been filled, who had come from things human to things heavenly; from the temporal to the eternal; from Florence to folk just and sane![5] Truly, this,[6] together with my ecstasy, made it a pleasure to hear nothing, and to remain silent. As a pilgrim, refreshed by gazing about the temple of his vow, even then hoping some day to

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[2] The throne of God.
[3] The Old and the New Testament.
[4] The Lateran was the seat of papal or imperial power at the time when Rome was mistress of the world.
[5] W. W. Vernon quotes Doctor Moore as saying: "I always think that putting Florence as the climax to the other two is one of the most intensely bitter things Dante ever wrote."
[6] Amazement.

tell others how it looks, such was I as I traversed the living light, my eyes wandering over the ranks, now up, now down, now sidewise. I saw faces that would move one to love, made beautiful by God's light and their own smile, and actions graced with every dignity.

My glance had by this time compassed the look of Paradise as a whole, but on no single part had my eyes as yet been riveted. With renewed zeal I turned to ask my lady about matters which were still doubtful in my mind. I intended one thing, and another answered me. I thought to see Beatrice, and behold, an old man,[7] robed like the heavenly host! His eyes and cheeks glowed with kindly joy; his bearing, with such gentleness as becomes an affectionate father.

Exclaiming: "Where is she?" he replied:

"To satisfy your longings, Beatrice induced me to leave my own place. If you will but look up to the third circle below the highest, you will again see her, and upon the throne which her deserts merit."

Without answering, I lifted my eyes, and saw her, crowned with the eternal rays which were reflected by her. From the highest region, where the thunder sounds, to the lowest depths of ocean that mortal eye can penetrate, is not so far as, in that place, Beatrice was raised above my sight. But this

[7] The old man is St. Bernard.

mattered not to me, for her image came down undimmed by intervening distance.

"O Lady, in whom my hope is strong, and who, for my salvation, did endure leaving your footprints in Hell, I now acknowledge the grace and virtue of all those things, which, through your power and your goodness, I have seen. By all the ways, by all the means[8] within your power, you have brought me from slavery to freedom. Preserve in me your own magnificence so that my soul, which you have made whole, may, when it shall leave the flesh, be pleasing to you still."

Such prayer I made; and she, it seemed so far away, smiled and looked at me; then turned to the Eternal Fountain.

And the holy old man said:

"In order that you may accomplish the entire journey, for the sake of which prayer and sacred love sent me to you, let your eyes range[9] fully about this garden; for looking at it will prepare your vision to rise still higher by the help of God's own light. And the Queen of Heaven, for whom I am wholly consumed with love, will grant us every favor because I am her faithful Bernard."

St. Bernard now begins to prepare Dante for the

[8] Prayers and love of Beatrice.
[9] Look at the Saints and Angels which make up the garden of Paradise.

final consummation of his vision. He must prepare himself gradually to behold the Divine Essence, by disciplining his sight, first to contemplate the glory of the Saints, and then, above all, that of Mary, "the Queen, to whom this Kingdom is subject and devoted." As a matter of fact all this part of the poem is steeped in the spirit of Mary's "Faithful Bernard," who, in one of his sermons, calls her the Sinner's Ladder, "whose top passes through the Heavens, until it reaches the well of living waters which are above the Heavens."

Then follows St. Bernard's first brief address to Dante about the Virgin, and this, by Dante's brief account of what he saw; a thing analogous to a passage of color in Fra Angelico's *Coronation of the Virgin,* translated, as far as may be, into words: a passage from Dante rendered, as far as may be, which is unbelievably far, into form and color by Fra Angelico. About the works of each, Dante and Fra Angelico, it matters not that more than fifty years intervened between the death of the former and the birth of the latter, there is the attribute of heavenly exquisiteness, which must be seen and felt to be understood; one of the most fascinating and peculiar attributes of Italy's greatest time; attribute which, upon the undying and always troubled present, descends like a continual benediction of faith and rest.

ST. BERNARD

"Son of Grace, this glad life will never be known to you so long as you fix your eyes only upon its lowest grades, but lift them through all the circles, even to the uttermost, until, upon her throne, you shall behold the Queen to whom this kingdom is subject and devoted."

I lifted up my eyes; and as at morning the eastern horizon is more beautiful than that to which the sun sinks, my gaze, climbing from valley-bottom to mountain-top, came finally to a place in the extreme distance that outshone all others. And as the glow is brightest in the east where the sun is expected, and to right and left the light fades away, so did that Oriflamme of Peace[10] seem vividest at the center and to pale away on every side. In that midmost center I saw more than a thousand jubilant Angels with wings outstretched, every one differing from all the others in brightness and in joy. And there I saw the Blessed Virgin smiling upon their ecstasies and songs, a Beauty which was a joy in the eyes of all the other Saints. Had I power of speech equal to imagination, I should not dare attempt the least of her enchantment.

[10] Golden flame, meaning the Virgin.

CANTO XXXII

All absorbed in his delight, that soul of contemplation[1] willingly became my mentor, speaking these holy words:

"The wound which Mary healed and anointed, was first inflicted by her,[2] who is so beautiful at Mary's feet. Below, in the rank formed by the third range of seats, sits Rachel with Beatrice, as you see. Sarah, Rebecca, Judith, and she who was great-grandmother of the singer[3] who, in sorrow for his sin, cried, "Have mercy upon me,"[4] you may look on in descending order, as I go downward through the rose, petal by petal, name by name. Below the seventh range, as above, from the first to the seventh, there is a succession of Hebrew women. They separate the leaves of the flower. They make the partition by which the sacred terraces of the rose are divided in accord with the view of Christ which their faith held. On this side where the flower is full blown, and every leaf is occupied, are those who believed in a Christ yet to come. On the other side, where the semicircles are broken by empty places, sit those who believed in Christ already come. As on this side, the glorious throne of the Queen of Heaven and the others below her, make so clear a

[1] St. Bernard, whose delight is in contemplating the Virgin.
[2] Eve.
[3] Ruth was David's great-grandmother.
[4] Psalm li:1.

division, so, opposite, does the seat of the great John, who, ever holy, endured the wilderness and martyrdom, and after these, for two years, Hell; beneath him, Francis, Benedict, Augustine and others are appointed for the division line, circle upon circle, down even to where we are. Consider the profound foresight of God, for one and the other view of faith[5] will help to fill this garden equally. And know, too, that below the range which midway cuts these two upright dividing lines, sit those who are here because of Another's merit, and not for their own. All these are spirits that were set free from the body before they had come to the age of discretion.[6] You can know it by their faces, and their childish voices, if you look at them and listen to them."

A little further on St. Bernard again speaks.

"Look now upon the face which is most like Christ's, for its bright radiance alone can prepare you to behold Christ."

I saw such a rain of gladness pouring down upon her, gladness that had its source among the blessed angels created to wheel and circle in the depth above her, that, all together, what I had seen before less amazed me, nor showed me anything so nearly like to God. And that Angel which long ago descended

[5] Those of the Old and those of the New Testament faith.
[6] Children.

to her, spread wide his wings in front of her, chanting, "Hail, Mary, full of grace."[7] Answering this sacred chant, the blessed Host rang out on every side, so that all the Saints became thereat the more serene.

"O Holy Father, who, for my sake, endures being down here, and leaving the blissful place wherein your seat is everlastingly appointed, tell me,—who is that Angel who looks into the eyes of our Queen with such ecstasy that he seems to be on fire?"

With such words did I again seek instruction from him[8] who was deriving beauty from Mary, as the morning star from the sun. And he answered me:

"Confidence and grace, as much as can be in Angel and in soul, are all in him,[9] and this is as we would wish it, for it is he who bore the palm down to Mary, when the Son of God elected to assume the burden of mortality.

"But now, as I go on to speak, follow with your eyes, and look upon the great patricians of this most just and holy empire. Those two who sit up yonder, happiest because nearest to the Empress, are, as it were, two roots of this rose. He who sits so close upon her left is the Father[10] through whose

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[7] Gabriel sings the words that he used for the Annunciation. Luke i:26.

[8] St. Bernard.

[9] Gabriel.

[10] Adam.

presumptuous tasting the race of man knows so much bitterness. At her right behold that venerable Father[11] of the Holy Church to whom Christ entrusts the keys of this beautiful flower. And he[12] who, before he died, saw all the grievous straights of the fair bride,[13] won with the spear and nails,[14] sits by him. At the other's side[15] sits that leader[16] under whom a thankless, fickle and stubborn people lived on manna. Behold Anna over against Peter, so wrapt in gazing on her daughter[17] that she does not move her eyes as she sings *Hosannah.* And, opposite the sire of all mankind, sits Lucia, who sent your lady to aid you at the time when you were bending your eyes downward, and were sinking backward.[18]

But because the moments of your dream[19] are going fast, we will stop enumerating, like a good tailor, who cuts the garment to suit the cloth, and turn our eyes toward the Primal Love,[20] so that, gazing

[11] St. Peter.
[12] St. John the Evangelist.
[13] The Church.
[14] Christ.
[15] Of Adam.
[16] Moses.
[17] The Virgin Mary.
[18] The time when Dante was returning to sin, and the valley of shadows, and was despairing of the hill-top, all of which is told at the beginning of *The Divine Comedy.*
[19] The idea is that Dante has made his great journey in spirit, his soul, as it were, moving through the universe while his body remained on Earth and asleep. He is now drawing near the goal, and so the time is short, and the moment of his soul's return to the body, the end of his vision, is near.
[20] God Himself.

upon Him, you may penetrate His light so far as is possible. But, lest perchance, beating your wings, you should go backward when you thought yourself advancing, it is necessary to obtain grace through prayer;—grace from her who has the power to succor you. Follow me now with such affection as will hold your heart intent upon my every word."

And he began this holy prayer.

CANTO XXXIII

"Virgin Mother, daughter of your own Son, more humble and exalted than any creature, predestined goal of the eternal mind, you are she who did so ennoble human nature that its own Creator did not disdain to be born of it. Renewed in your womb was the Love whose warmth made this rose blossom in eternal peace. Here, to us, you are the high-noon light of Love, and below, among men, you are the living source of Hope. So great are you, O Lady, and of such mighty will, that he who seeks grace, and does not go to you, would have his desire fly without wings. Your loving kindness not only helps him who asks, but many a time freely anticipates the asking. In you are joined, mercy, compassion, magnanimity, every virtue of human nature. Now does this man, who, from the lowest pit of the universe even up to this place, has seen, one upon another, every phase of the life after

death, pray that, of your grace, you grant him such strength of sight as shall enable him to rise yet higher toward Consummate Blessedness. And I, who never yearned more for my own vision than I do for his, make all my supplications unto you, praying they be not scant—that you will dispel for him every cloud of his mortality so that he may behold the Supreme Joy. Further, I beseech you, O Queen, who can accomplish whatever you will, that after so magnificent a vision, you preserve his affections pure. May your guardianship subdue his mortal passions. Behold Beatrice, and all the Saints, with hands clasped, join me in this prayer."[1]

Beatrice smiles her assent, and Bernard signs to Dante to look upward. He thereon tells us that his sight,

becoming pure, was entering deeper and yet deeper into the glow of that Sublime Light which Itself is Truth.

Thenceforth what I beheld transcends human speech, which must fail before such a vision, as human memory before such excess.

As is he who sees something in a dream, and, after the dream has fled, holds in mind his emotions, but

[1] The nearest approach, perhaps, to that impossible thing, a translation of poetry, that shall itself be poetry, is to be found in Chaucer's version of this prayer of St. Bernard. It occurs in the Second Nun's Tale.

not the details whence they arose, such am I, for my dream is almost wholly gone, yet in my heart the sweetness that was born of it still lingers. Even so is snow by the sun released; even so were the light leaves that bore the Sibyl's writing, lost on the wind.

Dante says that he held his eyes fixed upon the light fearing to be dazzled if he withdrew them; that, holding them so fixed, he was enabled to sustain the vision.

O abounding Grace, through which I might presume to fix my gaze upon the Everlasting Light, until, within it, I had seen my all!

My mind, wholly rapt, unswerving, fixed, intent, gazed, and gazing, was enflamed. In that Radiance one becomes such that henceforth it is impossible for him to consent to turn away for any other sight; because the Good which is the object of the will, is wholly centered on it, and outside of it, that is imperfect, which within is perfect.

From now on my speech will prove even less adequate for recounting what I can remember, than that of an infant who still wets its tongue at the breast. Not because there was more than a single aspect to the Living Light that I was looking into, for it is unchanging; but because my powers of vision, increasing as I gazed, that single aspect changed to me, as I myself was changing.

Within the deep clear being of that Exalted Radiance there appeared three circles of three colors, and the same dimension. One seemed reflected by the other, as Iris by Iris,[2] and the third seemed fire, which was equally breathed forth by the one and the other. How useless are words, and how hazy beside my conception, and my conception beside that which I saw is so petty that to call it little does not describe it.

O Eternal Light, that in Yourself dwells apart, and alone understands Yourself, and by Yourself understood and understanding, loves Yourself, and smiles upon Yourself! That circle[3] which within You appeared to be reflected, as I looked fixedly upon it, seemed to me to hold, painted in its own color, within Itself, our mortal image, because of which my eyes strayed not at all. As the geometer who devotes all his strength of mind to squaring the circle, and can not, by reasoning, discover the principle whereof he stands in need, such was I when I beheld this new apparition. I wished to see how our image was conformed to the circle, and how it has a place therein, but my wings were unequal to such a flight, had not a flash like lightning struck across my mind, and with it brought my wish.

Here power for the high vision failed, but already

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[2] The rainbow, arch within arch.

[3] A circle having neither beginning nor end is the fit symbol for everlasting, i. e., eternity.

my desire and my will were revolving, like an even-moving wheel, driven by the Love which moves the sun and the other stars.[4]

[4] In this final vision Dante's desire is gratified and he finds himself absorbed by, and circling in perfect unity with, the will of God.

With every rereading of *The Divine Comedy*, and with every reclosing of this supreme last canticle, one gets a clearer idea, and a deepened understanding of these sentences written by Edmund Gardner.

"Rarefied, indeed, is the atmosphere we breathe, from the sublime invocation to the Virgin Mother to the fading away of the vision of the invisible, with desire and will swayed perfectly by 'the Love that moves the sun and stars.' The prayers and aspirations of ages of suffering humanity have passed into it, the adoration and yearning of centuries, the ecstatic meditations of generations of rapt mystics have gone to the making of it; but the music to which it is wedded is that of the new poetry of the modern world." *Hibbert Journal*, October, 1904.

And under similar conditions one may realize with increasing force the quality of praise which James Russell Lowell bestows on Dante when he says, "so truly Catholic is he, that by him the Romanist proves his soundness in doctrine, the anti-Romanist claims him as the first Protestant."

This is the Dante whose readers increase as time goes on, generation after generation, recruited from nation upon nation to listen to the "deep, unfathomable song" which the passing of years only freshens and makes young.

THE END

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